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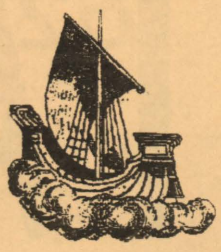
MATTHEW GRAEBER ON INK BLOTS, CAVE ART AND UFOs

MARTIN KOTTMEYER TIME-TRAVELS IN SEARCH OF THE BIRTH OF THE GREYS

THE ETH ON ITS LAST LEGS: MAGONIA ISSUES A CHALLENGE

PLUS: LETTERS, REVIEWS AND NORTHERN ECHOES

1968 - 1998 Thirty Glorious Years!



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Peter Rogerson's

NORTHERN ECHOES

In his *25 Years Ago* column in the pages of the previous issue of our esteemed organ, our great leader paid handsome tribute to the notorious INTCAT. which used to (dis?)grace the pages of the old MUFOB and the early editions of *Magonia*. It was truly a child of its time, a time of naive youth, when I actually thought you could tidily separate positive and negative cases. It was as I worked on INTCAT, and in the many discussions with my collaborators on the project that I began to realise that things were much more complicated. There were no unambiguously positive cases, and not all negative verdicts were secure. Getting half an ear on the often passionate debates in the French ufological circles of the time about the revisionist studies of the 1954 wave was a real eye opener. Even today British and American ufologists blithely quote cases from that period that their French colleagues had dismissed as hoaxes 20 years ago. The reason is largely that little of this literature has ever been published in English.

You note I said collaborators. I had help from a number of overseas ufologists, such as Richard Heiden, Jacques Bonabot, Ted Bloecher, Alain Gamard, Dave Webb and Barry Greenwood, not all of whom by any means shared my own opinions - it does of course go without saying that I received no help, interest or encouragement from BUFORA whose officials adopted their usual attitude of 'if we can't run it, we don't want to know'. In any case occult speculation not hard slog was their forte at the time.

After spending the best part of a decade on INTCAT, I largely abandoned the whole subject in the early 1980's keeping in my hand with the odd speculative article. It was the period of my transition from new ufologist to sceptic. My current incarnation as book reviewer in chief has done little to assuage my scepticism.

Reading through book after book one encounters time after time statements to the effect that X, Y or Z happened to A, B and C. What this means at best is that A has produced a narrative which purports to be his or her memory of certain experiences which s/he alleges B and C also encountered. Investigator D may get similar memorates from B and C, but often not. More often a précis of D' s report appears in a book or magazine, from which it is further summarised by author E, who is then quoted by F who is quoted by G.

Every one of these stages produces problems. We surely know enough of the problems of perception to know that even in the tiny proportion of cases in which we have real-time reporting either by tape, mobile phone or notebook, there are likely to distortions. The task of translating perceptions into words, which must depend on the verbal skills and cultural background of the reporter, will lead to even more distortions.

But 99% of the cases reported in anomaly literature are not real time reports, but memorates of past events, maybe only hours in the past, but in many cases, years ago. Here we encounter all the problems of memory, its distortions, false memories, confabulation, etc. The task of organising what may be difficult-to-express memories into coherent narratives will introduce still further problems. What I said about real time reports applies in spades. Especially when memories are ambiguous, vague or very anomalous, there is likely to be recourse to cultural narrative-telling traditions. The standardisation of abduction and NDE memorates is probably occurring here. Narrators make use of words, phrases, and whole chunks of narrative from similar stories they have read or heard. A tendency to tabloid speak may take place. Narrators may believe that a good narrative ought to have certain features. These may include conversion themes such as 'I was a sceptic until.....', 'I was shown a photo of great aunt Mabel and the figure I saw in my kitchen was her' or 'the policeman who investigated said his superiors knew all about this but weren't permitted to reveal...' or the linking of discrete imagery into a coherent narrative.

Even now the processes have hardly begun. If a narrative is investigated, the investigators almost invariably supply their own agenda, they will often supply the witness with new vocabulary and imagery with which to express their ideas, in many cases they will supply a ready made ideology (ETHism, spiritualism, belief in conspiracies etc., etc.) around which the witnesses may organise their experiences. Where there are multiple investigations, the later investigators may be simply relayed the propaganda of the first to get on the scene. Even the narrative itself will probably have been changed. This still applies when the same investigators interview the witness on several occasions. One should also note that witnesses may tailor their narratives to different investigators, depending on the latter's sex, age, apparent friendliness, appearance, education, compatibility with the witness, personal beliefs, etc.

Next come the problems which occur when the investigators reduce what may by a mass of recordings or notes into a publishable narrative. They may be guided by what parts of the narrative agree most with their own beliefs or agendas; more subtly they will be guided by what they think the witness experienced, what mental imagery the witnesses' narrative(s) conjure up in their heads. The published narrative will also be affected by the education, literary and verbal skills and life experiences of the investigators, and those of the assumed audience. When other writers use this first-generation narrative as a basis of their own précis, further selection, bias and misreading are likely to occur. This can go on for numerous generations of narrative production. The final result that we see in any given book may therefor bear very little resemblance to what 'actually happened'. Moreover we can never discover exactly what 'actually happened' - we weren't there and in the witness(es) mind(s). We may on the basis of past experience make good guesses. Certainly in many UFO cases in particular, we might be able to work out to our satisfaction what might have stimulated the original perception. But, we are never going to be in a position of proving, on the basis of narratives alone, that any given event is truly anomalous.

By the time we get to catalogue-type précis, we must give up any notion of positive and negative and recognise that at best we are getting nothing other than very reduced and probably very biased collections of folk stories. They may still say something of our general cultural beliefs however.

A Fatal Illusion

Matthew J. Graeber

Other UFO-related cases of unusual human behaviour involve the complete abandonment of highly sensitive listening posts by several US military personnel in Germany, so they might meet with a flying saucer that they believed was coming to Earth to pick them up, as well as the planned radioactive assassination of local government officials in New York State by UFO aficionados who thought that the authorities were covering up information about a saucer that had crashed near Long Island.

Of course, these are extreme examples and it would be totally unfair of me to paint the entire UFO subculture with the same brush. For, many saucer buffs are intelligent, hard-working and well-meaning folks and it is, in fact, precisely because of their good intentions and belief in the UFO phenomenon that they can be easily manipulated and exploited by charismatic, unscrupulous and deluded individuals who may be operating within the saucer movement itself.

Interestingly, in the early days of UFO charlatanism, the schemes (much like the developing UFO phenomenon) lacked the sophistication of today's technological-sounding scams, which not only include an array of bogus classified documents, photos, video footage and crashed saucer artifacts, but also the sanction of a growing number of credulous professionals who treat abductees and reportedly help them to deal with the post-traumatic stress and lingering anxiety of repeated experiences with alien beings that had kidnapped and abused them.

All this at the insistence (and, in many instances, the direction) of self-proclaimed UFO abduction experts, who often lack any sort of medical training or certification in clinical or forensic hypnosis.

In recent times the tragic suicide of 38 American UFO cult members has graphically illustrated the extremes that fixation and identification with alien life forms can have upon certain individuals. For not only did these troubled souls believe that by taking their lives they were also going to rendezvous with an extraterrestrial space ship that was skirting a comet's tail, but several of them had even shaved their heads and castrated themselves (perhaps in an effort to mimic the purely cerebral, highly spiritual and, presumably, asexual appearance of the space creatures that they anticipated meeting).

ASK NOT WHAT A SUPER-TECHNOLOGICAL ALIEN CIVILISATION CAN DO FOR YOU, ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP STRAIGHTEN OUT THE MESS RIGHT HERE ON PLANET EARTH!

The reported transformational effect of the abduction experience is believed to involve a spiritual, philosophical and intellectual heightening of the individual's self awareness through a continuing process of contact and educational interaction with alien intelligences that have selected the abductees for some specific purpose.

Several experts believe that the purpose of abduction is grounded in the immediate wants and needs of the aliens who are, apparently, attempting to bolster their own faltering genetic pool through a clone-splicing technique that they have perfected in order to thwart their impending extinction. Several other UFO experts feel that the benevolent aliens are concerned about our own planet's ever-mounting ecological, sociological and political woes; and that they have been visiting this world and covertly contacting some of its inhabitants in preparation for a kind of social reorganisation which will supposedly take place after the Earth goes through a period of dramatic changes (e.g. the result of a global catastrophe such as a nuclear holocaust, a complete ecological melt-down, a world-wide plague, or a bewildering series of natural disasters). In fact, it has even been suggested that the planet itself may be knocked off its axis by a rogue asteroid and entire continents might be swept away - beneath the angriest of seas.

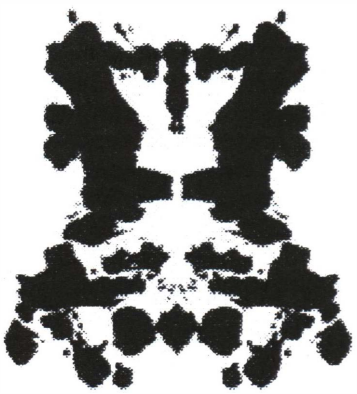
Still other reported after-effects of contacts with the alien Greys, as they are commonly called in UFO circles, are said to include a sense of cosmic consciousness (or, the magnified awareness of one's oneness with the universe), the occasional spontaneous cure or remission of various physical, immunological, emotional and psychological disorders, as well as the abductees experiencing marked changes in their career choices, personal interests and long-term goals. But, beyond all of the above, human contact with the aliens has also produced marked alterations in the way the abductee perceives him- or herself, even to the point of their experiencing sexual identity difficulties and/or gross distortions of self, which includes the questioning of their even belonging to the human race or feeling any sort of allegiance to it. That the abductees would identify, sympathise and voice open affection for their captors is not an unknown psychological phenomenon. But, that the abductees would so readily cast off their humanity and profess partial (i.e., hybrid) or total kinship with their alien captors does seem to open the door to much deeper contemplation.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

The problem, of course, is that few abduction experts have the requisite medical training to fully comprehend the dangers of hypnotically probing the unconscious mind of the individuals they matter of factly call the abductees . A term which automatically confirms as physically real the very confusing experiences which these perplexed individuals have sought out the experts about. But, even worse than that, the term sets them up for additional experiences, simply because it is common knowledge throughout the UFO community that the Greys always come back for the abductees, and their children too! Perhaps it was this expectation and fear that led a woman in the UK to kill her young grandchildren before they would be kidnapped by aliens?

Beyond this, the UFO experts' lack of perception regarding the marked psychical background of the so-called abduction experience (i.e., its mythopoeic make-up and dream-like contradictory content) means that the experts must keep coming up with new (and often ridiculous) explanations of how and why the aliens might do something that is obviously nonsensical in character (e.g., the little Greys can reportedly levitate at will, lift and carry the much larger and heavier humans that they have captured - yet, they often walk their victims to their waiting space craft and climb stairs into its hatchway, even though they reportedly filtered through the locked doors and brick walls of the abductee's home only moments before).

Rorschach demonstrated that meaningful material buried deep in an individual's subconscious can be brought to the surface by having them mull over a series of ink-blots in an effort to determine what they saw in them



Yet another obvious contradiction pops up in the reports when the dematerialising aliens use metallic instruments to perform invasive surgical procedures upon their human captives, especially when they are also alleged to be capable of inducing the abductees' bodies to dematerialise as well.

Moreover, today's medical practitioners can routinely perform similar gynaecological procedures to those that the aliens reportedly employ, but without producing the marked fear and pain which so frequently characterise the medical aspects of the abduction experience.

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE UNKNOWN

In many instances, man's encounters with the unknown were believed to be real contacts with gods, spirits, or demons of various description, and often involved the experiencer's being whisked off to magical realms beneath the Earth or sea, high upon a mountain, deep within the forest, or in the firmament above.

Today's abduction reports often feature similar mythological settings in their scenarios (albeit with a technological accent) and we even discover reports of UFO interiors which have earthen floors and shag rug wall-to-wall carpeting ! (Indeed, dirt floors in a supposedly highly advanced and medically sterile space craft.) In fact, the UFO which reportedly kidnapped Linda Cortile (the central figure in Budd Hopkins's book *Witnessed*) was said to have plunged into the Hudson River with all hands on board rather than flitting off into the starry sky with its cargo of human captives. So, the question immediately arises - was the craft a sub-UFO from Earth's inner space or an ill-fated space craft from outer space?

While it seems perfectly normal for modern man to dismiss the idea that wee folks, fairies, leprechauns, and hobgoblins actually existed and occasionally interfaced with our forbears - a great many people living in very sophisticated societies as little as a century ago absolutely did believe that such tales were true. Indeed, some folks even believe it to this very day. The point is that, in a hundred years or so, it may be that our contemporary beliefs in UFOs and the pint-sized creatures that pilot them will also become a curiously amusing fact, especially when one considers that the UFO legend's tales are so highly characteristic of our society and our times (i.e., an era in which our own space-conquering aspirations have been projected upon an array of alien intelligences that we assume to be flourishing somewhere in the cosmos - a fact that Dr C.G. Jung pointed out over forty years ago in his landmark book Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies).

In short, we may be lifting our eyes, minds, hopes, and hearts to the skies in search of a super-technological deity instead of the supernatural god that our ancestors worshipped. We may be yearning for an answer to our tiny planet's ever-mounting problems - fantasising and, in so doing, inventing a new-age panacea (or super-advanced technological response) to the dark side of our own sciences and technologies, and the nuclear/toxic demons that we have unwittingly created and unleashed upon ourselves.

That this panacea should take the form of little creatures with swollen heads that are choc-full of intelligence and good will towards mankind (instead of a host of angels with blaring trumpets bursting through the firmament), informs us that a growing faith in advanced

sciences and technology has woven its way into our culture's unconscious, even to the point that UFOs (i.e., the symbol of the panacea) have been invested with the power of bringing salvation to mankind. A power which they do not possess and in no way deserve.

Man has always feared and revered strange and awesome things that he's seen in the skies - he had recorded his perceptions upon cave walls, clay tablets, and video camcorders. Perhaps knowing what the signs in the skies actually were never was as important as what the observer believed they were, and the tremendous impact that such beliefs have had upon the human psyche.

Perhaps UFOs have always played a part in the living experience of man. Perhaps they have been called soul-sparks by the ancients and space ships by today's observers. Perhaps, too, their operators have been known as angels, demons, wee-folks, and Greys. Are these creatures from outer space, inner space, or a space and time existing somewhere in between these divisional concepts? Do they seek to contact us consciously, unconsciously, or on a spiritual level?

UFOS AND INKBLOTS

Like many great artists, Leonardo DaVinci was fully aware of the inner mind's ability to well up images, and we find that even his friend and colleague Piero DiCosimo commented on how many wonderful creatures could be found hidden in the stains of masonry work in his writings. Of course, we've all had some personal childhood experience with seeing various animal shapes in cloud formations; and, if one tries hard enough, quite a few other imaginary things can be spotted lurking in the shadows of leafy trees too.

In the early 1900s, Dr Hermann Rorschach (a Swiss psychiatric pioneer) effectively demonstrated that extraordinarily meaningful material buried deep in an individual's subconscious could be brought to the surface by having that person attentively mull over a series of ink blots in an effort to describe what they saw in them.

In most instances, just about everyone tends to see the same kind of things in fluffy clouds and Dr Rorschach's ink-blot plates simply because the general shape of the visually perceived external object that they are gazing at does bear some degree of similarity to a mentally stored image of some other object that they are comparing it to.

But, it seems that after one's initial comparative or reductive processes have been exhausted regarding Rorschach's ambiguous ink blots, some unusual things start to happen to a person's perceptive abilities. This also appears to be the case in many UFO observations, and may even play an important role in the close-encounter experiences that occasionally follow them.

As any seasoned field investigator can tell you, quite often the play of reflected sunlight or cloud shadowing upon an otherwise easily discernible object (such as a commercial airliner's fuselage) may create false optical cues that can cause a person to misidentify the aircraft and call it a UFO. What's more, because the startled UFO observer does not have the opportunity to replay the incident and, therefore, cannot possibly verify his or her observation, they may not ever realise that they have mistakenly identified a fixed-wing aircraft for an unidentified flying object.

Interestingly, it seems that even though an individual undergoing Rorschach testing has the opportunity to take a good long look at a particular Rorschach plate, nevertheless the general shape and even the coloration of the ink blot tends to play an important role in the mental formulation of the kind of things that he or she will see in it. This may be a very important factor for UFO researchers to consider because the changing size, shape and coloration of a fleeting UFO or its pulsating lighting may produce (or induce) similar effects upon the experiencer's perceptive skills.

Considering the adverse effect that shadow, distance, darkness, and poor weather conditions might have upon an individual's optical acuity at the time of their sighting - it seems reasonable to suspect that UFO watching, much like ink-blot gazing, primarily involves the observation of a strange object or some pattern of ambiguous lights that are usually seen against the backdrop of a night-time sky.

According to Jung the mandala is an important archetype which tends to appear to people when there is a profound emotional need in their life

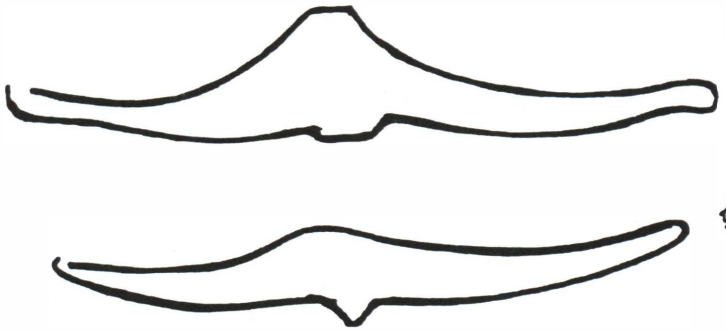
So, it is not surprising that one's best attempts to positively identify the object (or the distant lights) are going to become embellished with subjective (apperceptive) phenomena that form around the object, or may tend to fill in the empty space that is situated in between the mysterious points of light - investing them with not only a structural configuration, but also volition and, in some cases, even questionable intent. Naturally, these attributes are projected upon the unknown object by the observer as a result of their emotional and intuitive responses to the situational and confrontational character of their UFO encounter; and, once that happens, their UFO experience broadens and deepens, taking on a subjective tone which may also include the active influence of very primitive introjective processes (i.e., assuming that the object is intelligently guided or that the UFO operators have specifically selected the observer for some reason).

All of these factors must be seriously considered by the objective UFO researcher simply because one cannot be certain which percentage of UFO reports are generated by the observation of space craft from another world (or holographic imagery that is transmitted by an alien civilisation), as opposed to those that may have their origin in the depths of man's inner space - that is, his unconscious mind. And, of course, there is also the distinct possibility that the UFO experience is both objective and subjective in nature, and that separation of the two is simply beyond our investigative skills.

This appears to be the case where a physically real airborne object (be it a misidentification of some sort, or a real UFO) is observed and then the observer projects his or her own psychical contents upon it - very much like what happens during Rorschach testing experiences.

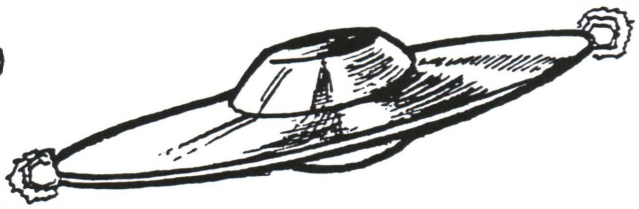
In his landmark psychological exploration of the UFO phenomenon, Dr C.G. Jung identified

CAVE ART ILLUSTRATIONS



BRACE-SHAPED OR EARLY CLAVIFORM SIGNS FROM GALLERY B
AT LA PASIEGA, SPAIN. ABOUT 15,000 BC
(LEROI – GOURHAN, ANDRE'. PRE HISTOIRE de d'ART OCCIDENTAL)

"DOME-TOPPED FLYING DISK"



COMPARATIVE DRAWINGS

CAVE ART SKETCHES (ROUGHLY 26,000 BC TO 7,000 BC)

SEVERAL VARIETIES OF CLAVIFORM SIGNS FROM THE CAVE ART RESEARCHES OF LEORI-GOURHAN
(PRE HISTOIRE de d'ART OCCIDENTAL)

MODERN DAY
UFO CONFIGURATIONS SEVERAL VARIETIES OF UFO CONFIGURATIONS FROM INDEPENDENT UFO RESEARCHERS' CASE FILES

M.J.GRAEBER
(J.TASH CASE)
LANDED UFO
1976

F.B.SALISBURY
UTAH UFO DISPLAY
1974

M.J.GRAEBER
(RAEFIELD CASE)
1976

R.E.FOWLER
UFOS INTERPLANETARY
1974

the basic discoidal (or round) UFO configuration as being similar to that of a meditative mantra and several other symbolic manifestations of the self which, as we know from our studies of depth psychology, is a very important archetype that tends to spontaneously appear to individuals when there is a profound emotional need present in their lives, or when they are caught up in a seemingly hopeless or overwhelming situation. Both of these prerequisites seem to fit the above mentioned UFO experience model which speculatively describes the UFO encounter as being a kind of display or the symbolic equivalent of some internal conflict that is unconsciously troubling but, nevertheless, affecting the observers at the time of their UFO encounter.

I am not alone with this estimate of the UFO situation, for several other researchers have come to similar conclusions regarding a display factor in UFO events and, quite recently, Dr R. Leo Sprinkle (noted psychologist/ufologist of Laramie, Wyoming) has presented a paper on the psychical analysis of UFO experiences which echoes Dr C.G. Jung's assertion that the UFO may be (at least in part) a symbolic representation of the observer's self . But these guestimates are based upon present-day UFO reports and the investigative data that today's researchers are gathering. It would be fascinating to see how far back into history such displays may have been recorded. It would also be interesting to attempt to determine what impact the presence of such ambiguous aerial objects may have had upon our forebears.

CAVE ART AND UFOS

Curiously, UFO-like shapes and forms have been discovered amidst the human and animal forms depicted in Palaeolithic and Neolithic cave art which is generally thought to have been created during the time when man's consciousness was first developing (i.e., roughly one million years ago). These, too, are believed to have been produced while early man was involved with welling up mentally stored images of the many animals that he hunted and feared. But, unlike the beautiful deer, bison and horses that appear to have been repeatedly drawn in the same area of the caves and were apparently used for some kind of hunting magic ritual, these unusual circles, braces and chevrons were not drawn in layers and are believed by many experts to have had an independent mythology connected to them. Interestingly, squares, chevrons, and a series of circles and dots commonly called recall-benders frequently pop up in Rorschach testing too.

Although there may be a number of possible explanations for the existence of the UFO-like cave drawings, two seem to be the most plausible. Either the cave man recorded his real-world encounter with such objects, or he dreamed of such forms and the dreams had such a profound impact on him in the waking state that he wanted to share his experience with his contemporaries.

In either case, it appears that these UFO-like shapes were considered important enough to merit separate space upon the cave walls, for they are not pitted and marred like the animal depictions which have obviously been subjected to many missile impacts that

probably occurred during a hunting magic ritual. In other words, the UFO-like drawings have been afforded a separate space within the caves, and they probably had an entirely separate mythology associated with them.

The experts on cave art seem to be somewhat perplexed by these drawings and, of course, opinions vary quite a bit regarding their possible meaning. The so-called brackets are often thought to be a stylised version of the female form about to receive male sexuality, while some experts feel that the brackets may be related to the sexual aggression of the cave man himself.

One thing seems certain. These forms are totally unlike anything that is thought to have existed in the cave man's natural environment. They appear to be symmetrical, possibly aerodynamic in design, and they also have a modern-day technological look about them. While they may not actually be depictions of UFOs, one must admit that they certainly do look a great deal like sketches that today's observers produce regarding their encounters with alien space vehicles.

Dare we ponder the notion that contact with alien intelligences could be channelled through the vast reaches of man's inner space (i.e., his unconscious mind) and that such contacts may have been going on since mankind's conscious dawning? Dare we believe that human inner space is just as vast, wondrous and awesome as outer space and that we have barely touched the surface of the mysteries and wonders that lie within its depths? Indeed, depths from which the UFOs themselves may hail?

No matter how far we reach out amongst the stars, we must always bear in mind that in our outreaching lies a human motive, and that the further we reach the deeper the want, the need, the fear, or the desire is to touch the face of the unknown (i.e., perhaps that which we do not actually know about ourselves).

As we are about to enter the 21st century, we might do well to note that despite our new sciences and great technological advancements we are still linked to our distant ancestors and carry the essence of their being within us. Have we become so estranged from this primal fabric that signals from it are thought to be attempted communications from an alien world? What is the signal in the noise of UFO reports? And, even more importantly, why is it being picked up by so many people at this particular point in human history?

UFO IMAGERY ANALYSIS

Although Hermann Rorschach's work with the phenomenon of human perception (its alteration or distortion) is generally applied to the diagnosis of pathology, some experts feel that it might be an error to assume that it is not also a viable method for studying the workings of perceptual phenomena in normals too. Dynamic UFO Displays may be one of many such phenomena, for the sudden and ofttimes riveting perception of a Dynamic Display or close encounter may trigger a projection function that displaces some of the excess psychical energy (libido) assigned to an internal conflict that may be adversely affecting an individual. Thus, the Dynamic Display variety of UFO experience may be thought of as a self-regulating function of the psyche which is induced into activity by intrusive sensory stimulation (i.e., the impact of encountering a UFO) as opposed to the tranquil meditative process of Rorschach plate scrutiny.

Even in cases where the UFO investigator is completely unable to resolve the UFO report as a misidentification of a conventional airborne object (or perhaps an atmospheric anomaly of some kind), he or she is still left with the opportunity to examine the observer's recollection of what the unidentified flying object looked like, how it appeared to operate and, of course, how it may have interacted with them. This is most valuable information because, if we are correct about the UFO's image and its interactive performance being dramatic representations of the observer's self condition , we can learn something about the UFO experience's meaningfulness in regard to the observer's wants, needs, fears and expectations, along with something about the general make up of their defensive shielding. Indeed, we might consider a Dynamic UFO Display as a form of self-perception and communication that is triggered by the UFO's presence in our skies - and even more importantly - in our lives.

IS THE SIGNAL SYMBOLIC?

In order to interpret the symbolic materials that well up during the subject's observation and interaction with the UFO, the investigator must attempt to determine what the UFO (as an image) may actually represent on the one hand (e.g., a misidentification of some physical and external airborne object(s), or perhaps a totally unknown anomaly) and how that object's image and behaviour might be symbolically linked to the psychology of the observer(s) on the other hand. It is also apparent that what is observed during a UFO experience and how it is emotionally perceived and responded to is not solely determined by the observer's conscious estimation of his or her UFO encounter, but also by the active influence of a mixed bag of intrapsychical forces that come into play during the event.

Since we suspect that the primary sensory stimulation (which is visual in most UFO cases) and the observer's logical estimation of the experience concerning the size, shape, colouring and nearness of the object, is also backed up by emotional, intuitive and instinctual inputs that quickly flow across intrapsychic structures during the event, the UFO researcher should be on the look out for any bits and pieces or archetypal and/or instinctual debris that may be clinging to the observer's account of their encounter with an unidentified flying object or its occupants.

In regard to this process, it seems that the altered or distorted form of perception which is instigated into activity by the ambiguity of the ink-blot plates in the case of Rorschach testing, and the oftentimes equally ambiguous, though obviously much more shocking, process of UFO watching primarily involves the subject's complete fixation with the object, and a general falling away (or perhaps the total absorption) of their reality testing during the experience (e.g., Well, it was quite dark that night and at first I thought it was an aeroplane, or maybe a helicopter...but, then, as it hovered just above my head, I slowly realised that it was something unlike I'd ever seen before).

Dynamic UFO Display case studies graphically illustrate that UFO researchers do have the ability to identify the symbolic contents in UFO reports which relate to both the observer's personal life conflicts and even those that may be considered to be far more rudimentary (or archetypal) in character.

THE UFO SIGHTING AND ITS POTENTIALLY BENEFICIAL EFFECT?

If certain visually perceived imagery such as that found in Rorschach's plates and some UFO configurations do have the ability to deeply penetrate the human psyche and induce the displacement of archetypal symbols, subconscious contents, and psychic energy, we are obliged to further examine this remarkable phenomenon in an attempt to determine if there may be some therapeutic application for such a process. Perhaps the cinematic replication (i.e., animation or computer animation) of UFO-like imagery which may be custom-designed from the information gathered by the therapist during counselling sessions with his or her patients might be as effective a tool as the purely mentally generated images that guided imagery practitioners presently attempt to direct at an array of physical, emotional and immunological disorders. Perhaps the sudden impact on perceiving a Dynamic UFO Display may enhance or surpass the effectiveness of the passive guided imagery techniques because of its highly confrontational character and deeply penetrating impact on the observer(s).

Perhaps, too, this same sort of psychical shock was the driving force that first nudged early man to conceive of things that did not yet exist, but surely would some day, simply because he could create them.

Varicose Brains: entering a Grey area

Martin Kottmeyer

The image of the alien in UFO culture has generally been dominated by an entity with a large, bald head. Usually the being is small compared to humans. Often the limbs and torso are described as thinner or more slender, but the more closely universal rule is that such aliens are never fat or obese. Current convention labels all approximations to this stereotypical ufonaut with the term Greys. Ostensibly this is because of the greyish skin tones usually being associated with this body type. In practice, absence of this defining trait does not inhibit use of the label so long as a big bald head appears somewhere in the description.

The project of assembling a history of this alien stereotype with a view to understanding its origins and rise to dominance is a daunting one because there are special hazards. There are no maps to guide us. As an undrawn and untested area of history, there will inevitably be missteps, overlooked treasures, and uncertainties. My concern is basically one of getting a good outline sketched. I hope this is regarded as a good pioneering effort, not as the final word. Better funded research would surely net much additional material.

We will start this history by offering the proposition, watch the wording, that the idea underlying the Greys was constructed in the 19th century. The emphasis here is on the word idea. Images that fit loosely the definition of Greys can be found here and there in art and myths long pre-dating the modern era. Finding them is an easy and pleasant diversion. Take the Greco-Egyptian painting of mortuary house 21 at Tuna-Gebel. It has an entity with a large smooth head and very slender build that includes a pencil-neck. Few would quarrel that the look matches that of the Greys. The fact that the being is the shadow of the deceased represented symbolically as a black emaciated corpse makes it questionable that the look carries the modern idea. (1)

Gregory Little has found a description of the watchman at the gates of Sheol in the Hebrew Book of Enoch as grey in colour, short like children, and taking on a somewhat human-like appearance which he says left him stunned. (2) I've described elsewhere items from ancient Denmark and the Congo whose facial features mimic the exotic facets of Strieber's Visitor. (3) Such images are quite scattered and seem random outcomes of the immense creativity of the artists exploring hundreds of permutations of form. There is no evidence of deeper linkages between them and current UFO beliefs and no hint of historical connections. As a parallel example, ponder how some short bald fairies ended up in *Star Trek, Next Generation*, Starfleet uniforms even though the painting was done in 1880 by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's father. (4) I may not be able to rule out some swirly space-time anomaly causing such things, but coincidence has to be the favoured judgement.

The trait of big-headedness can be found associated with aliens inhabiting the sun in Pierre Boitard's *Musee des familles* (1838), but the beings possess hair and otherwise seem completely human. This seems a simple way of representing higher intelligence in such beings. I consider it as slightly outside the definition of a Grey. (5)

The idea underlying the Greys did not and could not exist before the idea of evolution. Christian theology held that life was created by God in the first week of time. Each species was optimally designed for its niche in the hierarchy of Nature and, presumably, given all the fuss over the Ark, would never be re-created. Transformation of form or future improvement on present design held no place in such a world view. Evolution was heretical and rarely considered at length prior to the 19th century. It is to one of the proponents of an early version of evolution, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, that we will turn to for an important element of our history.

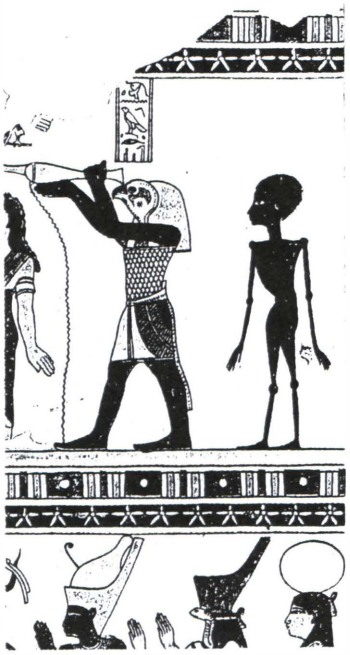
Lamarck was an early opponent of the ideas of special creation and catastrophism. Nature did everything little by little and successively. Where earlier thinkers spoke of a great chain of being with each species created specifically for its place, Lamarck felt that varying environmental pressures created new needs which increased the use of certain organs and made them more perfect while adding to the organism's complexity. Conversely, 'the permanent disuse of an organ, arising from a change in habits, causes a gradual shrinkage and ultimately the disappearance and even extinction of that organ'.(6)

Lamarck regarded man as a probable product of evolution. The process, he felt, reached the limits of complexity and perfection and, while noting individual instances of the perfecting or degradation of reason, will, and morality, was not compelled to speculate on the future of the human form. Since man's intelligence and powers protect him from the voracity of any animal, man could potentially multiply indefinitely, but he believed the will of the Sublime Author installed a safety feature: 'But nature has

given him numerous passions which unfortunately develop with his intelligence, and thus set up a great obstacle to the extreme multiplication of individuals of his species. It seems, in fact, that man himself is responsible for keeping down the numbers of his kind; for I have no hesitation in saying the earth will never be covered by the population that it might support; several of its habitable regions will always be sparsely populated in turns, although the periods of these fluctuations are, so far as we are concerned, immeasurable'. (7) Man 'assuredly presents the type of highest perfection that nature will attain to...' (8)

Towards 1866, a Lamarckian named Alpheus Hyatt indicated that his studies of fossils were providing a less optimistic understanding of the process of evolution. Just as individuals slip into senility and decrepitude at the end of life, groups like races and species display a senile phase before going extinct. This theory of racial senescence would have become an indispensable feature in the doctrine of orthogenesis. It held that the organism was not shaped by natural selection, but by processes internal to the germ plasm which caused modifications along trend-lines that ran on till they became overdeveloped and detrimental to survival. Examples of the process could be found in the huge antlers of the Irish elk, the demise of the sabre-toothed tiger, and the massiveness of the dinosaurs. Hyatt himself believed man was already showing senile and regressive features. The tendency of females to be increasingly similar to males seemed especially ominous. (9)

The writings of Herbert Spencer, another Lamarckian, provide us with the next step in the development of the idea underlying the Greys. In his work *The Principles of Biology* (1875), he speculates at length on the human future. He feels there will be 'larger-brained descendents' and the brain will have more convolutions, a more developed structure. Spencer believed the brain would also put a heavier tax upon the organism. Asserting the existence of 'an apparent connection between higher cerebral development and prolonged sexual maturity', evidence that excessive expenditure in mental activity during education causes complete or partial infertility, and conversely that 'where exceptional fertility exists there is a sluggishness of mind', Spencer concluded further evolution may be expected to cause a decline in his power of reproduction. (10)



An entity with a large smooth head and very slender build that includes a pencil neck. Few would quarrel that the look matches that of the Greys

There most likely would be greater delicacy of manipulation, better co-ordination of complex movements, and a 'corresponding development of perceptive and executive faculties'. There would also be greater power of self-regulation and higher emotional development. He would be more moral. Crimes and cruelties would cease. Of strength and agility, Spencer doubted there would be further improvement. He does not explicitly articulate that a general degeneration of the rest of the body would follow, but that is now a very small step away. (11)

We should digress to point out that Darwin does not belong to this line of development. His theory of evolution by natural selection builds in part on Lamarck's arguments against special creation and catastrophism while stripping it of its central mechanism of use-inheritance. The issue of Darwin's views of progress is a notoriously thorny subject and on the matter of the future form of man he was silent. He seemed to think some ongoing natural selection existed in the destruction of more primitive peoples. However, he also was concerned that natural selection no longer operated to scythe down the sickly and degenerate. Any slow evolution of mankind, however, paled next to his pet-horror , the eventual and inevitable ice-death of the earth under the aegis of a cooling sun. 'To think of the progress of millions of years with every continent swarming with good and enlightened men all ending in this...*Sic transit gloria mundi* with a vengeance.' (12)

Alfred Russell Wallace, Darwin's co-discoverer of natural selection, believed the human physique was no longer subject to natural forces. War killed off the strongest and bravest. Skin colour and hair perhaps still evolved, but the body remained an upright ape. The human species was still capable of spectacular advance with women's rights giving females free choice in marriage and allowing them to reject males who were chronically diseased, intellectually weak, idle, or utterly selfish. (13) These matters, however, belonged to the moral and spiritual realms, not the realm of man's physical being.

Thomas Henry Huxley, the era's most prominent Darwinian, also lies outside this line of development, but bears special attention and caution. Scholars have caricatured him alternately as a naive advocate of progress and a purveyor of cosmic pessimism. These extreme interpretations derive from selective focus on separate facets of a carefully balanced view blending the lessons of natural history and social history.

Early writings indicate he 'had no confidence in the doctrine of ultimate happiness', but it was impossible for him to be blind to the improvements in life that science was making manifest around him in his personal sphere. (14) Huxley often walked with Spencer arguing over the nature of evolutionary and social progress. (15) Huxley soon developed a metaphor of society advancing, insect-like, from grub to butterfly. There are periods of repressive restraint, Dark Ages, which are broken in dramatic moults like the French Revolution. The old constraints break open and the grub puffs up in the rationalist air. Each moult moves us closer to a butterfly state of man, albeit that may prove to be terribly distant . (16)

In 1894 he offered his mature statement on these matters in *Evolution and Ethics* and one sees the same balance. He rejects the prospect of utopia, 'the prospect of attaining untroubled happiness, or of a state which can, even remotely, deserve the title of perfection, appears to me as misleading an illusion as ever dangled before the eyes of poor humanity'. (17) Yet, 'that which lies before the human race is a constant struggle to maintain and improve'. (18)

The theory of evolution

encourages no millennial expectations, he writes. (19) More, 'There is no hope that mere human beings will ever possess enough intelligence to select the fittest. (20) He sees 'no limit to the extent to which intelligence and will, guided by sound principles of investigation and organised in common effort, may modify the conditions for a period longer than that now covered by history. And much may be done to change the nature of man himself...[we] ought to be able to do something towards curbing the instincts of savagery in civilised men [thus permitting] a larger hope of abatement of the essential evil of the world...' (21)

Evolution, however, permits both progressive and retrogressive development. (22) The most daring imagination will hardly venture upon the suggestion that the power and the intelligence of man can ever arrest the procession of the great year'. (23) Eventually, 'the evolution of our globe shall have entered so far upon its downward course that the cosmic process resumes its sway; and once more, the State of Nature prevails over the surface of our planet'. (24) This is an allusion to the thermodynamic heat death of Earth.

To point to these latter quotes and label it cosmic pessimism has the perverse air of saying that someone who expects to achieve of some measure of happiness and success and die at 120 is being depressing. Huxley dialectically balanced optimism and pessimism in a manner he felt most people did. (25) Huxley nowhere comments on the future biological shape of man as Spencer did, nor does he dwell on the implications of the possibility of his retrogressive modification.

The final steps in the development of the idea underlying the Greys were made by one of Huxley's students. The student thought Huxley was the greatest man he ever knew and when he published his first book he sent his teacher a copy with a note that read:

'May 1895. I am sending you a little book that I fancy may be of interest to you. the central idea - of degeneration following security -

The final steps in the development of the ideas underlying the Greys were made by one of Huxley's students. When he published his first book he sent his teacher a copy

was the outcome of a certain amount of biological study. I daresay your position subjects you to a good many such displays of the range of authors but I have this excuse - I was one of your students at the Royal College of Science and finally (?): The book is a very little one'. (26)

It was a work of fiction which describes a traveller's encounter with a delicate little people of the far future. The first person is described as 'a slight creature - perhaps 4 feet high - clad in a purple tunic, girdled at the waist with a leather belt. Sandals or huskins were on his feet; his legs were bare to the knees and his head was bare... He struck me as being a very beautiful and graceful creature, but indescribably frail. His flushed face reminded me of the more beautiful kind of consumptive - that hectic beauty of which we used to hear so much'. As he observes more of them he notes their Dresden china prettiness had peculiarities. They had some curly hair that did not go past the neck and cheek. There was no trace of beard or other facial hair. Their lips were thin. The ears were singularly minute. Chins were small and ran to a point. The eyes were large, but mild and indifferent.

There is nothing said about the size of the head and the intelligence of these people is slight. Their behaviour is child-like and playful and they show a lack of interest in the traveller. There was little to distinguish the sexes. The traveller eventually learns the name of this beautiful race - Eloi. He also learns of a second race - the Morlocks - which are described as a white, ape-like human spider. They tend the underworld of machines which made the utopia of the aristocratic Eloi possible.

The title of the story was *The Time Machine*. (27) The student was H.G. Wells. His boast to Huxley that it was based on an amount of biological study is easily proven. Four years earlier he had written a non-fiction essay titled *Zoological Retrogression* which displayed his familiarity with the biological literature involving degeneration. In it he describes a popular and poetic formulation of evolution as a steadily rising mountain slope which he terms Excelsior biology. Proclaiming it lacking any satisfactory confirmation in geological biology or embryology, he argues degeneration has entire parity with progressive trends. He points to ascidians, cirripeds, copepods, corals, sea-mats, oysters mussels, and mites as examples. Advance has been fitful and uncertain. There is no guarantee in scientific knowledge of man's permanence or permanent ascendancy. Huxley's teachings are apparent except for one point of divergence. Wells concludes, The Coming Beast must certainly be reckoned in any anticipatory calculations in the Coming Man. (28)

Though Wells affects to be swimming against the stream of mass opinion in this essay, some historians would argue he was being swept along by the currents of his time. The concept of degeneration wasn't new and the Victorian era's concerns over the permanent underclass bred in urban areas like London had spawned a theory of urban degeneration which held a powerful appeal to the British after 1885 no matter what their politics. (29) This degeneration scare, as it has been termed, was part of a yet larger trend of cultural pessimism spreading among Western intellectuals. (30) Peter Bowler, an expert on evolutionary theories of the era, speculates that E. Ray Lankester's book *Degeneration* is a likely source of the ideas behind The Time Machine. The basic doubt of this attribution is that the concept of degeneration was present in so many forums from medical journals like The Lancet to much popular fiction; Wells could have constructed it from multiple sources. (31)

The 11th chapter of The Time Machine takes the reader beyond the time of the Eloi and Morlocks to a yet farther future where the earth approaches its end. Life had grown sparse and was in obvious regression. The dominant form was an ungainly monster crab smeared in slime. He goes another thirty million years into the future and only lichen and liverworts remained. That and a black, round, hopping thing with tentacles trailing from it. It seems like Alpheus Hyatt

writ large; life as a whole falls into senescence before all earth goes extinct.

The Eloi come half way to our image of the Grey in short and fragile bodies being indicative of a degenerative evolutionary history. What is missing is the big, bald head. Wells began playing with that part of the image maybe as early as 1885 for an address before a student debating society. It was written out for publication in a facetious book review for the *Pall Mall Budget*, 9 November, 1893. Of a Book Unwritten, The Man of the Year Million" is a short piece with no ambitions of wanting to be taken seriously. Wells imagines a book titled *The Necessary Characters of Man of the Remote Future deduced from the Existing Stream of Tendency*. Though easily missed by contemporary readers, Wells is telegraphing the intent to play upon the ideas of orthogenesis which as its name implies dealt in straight-line trends in the fossil record. Just as a fish is moulded to swimming and a bird is moulded to flight, man's form will be determined by the trait of intelligence. We already see the decay of much of the animal part of man; the loss of hair, the loss of teeth, the diminution of jaw and mouth, slighter mouths and ears. Athleticism yields to a subtle mind in real-world competition. The coming man, then, will clearly have a larger brain, and a slighter body than the present. (32)

Behold the dim strange vision of the latter day face suggested by loss of unused features:Eyes large, lustrous, beautiful, soulful; above them, no longer separated by rugged brow ridges, is the top of the head, a glistening hairless dome, terete and beautiful; no craggy nose rises to disturb by its unmeaning shadows the symmetry of that calm face, no vestigial ears project; the mouth is a small perfectly round aperture, toothless and gumless, unanimal, no futile emotions disturbing its roundness as it lies, like the harvest moon or the evening star, in the wide firmament of face. (33)

Potentially, man's knowledge of organic chemistry will supplant the use of a stomach and alimentary canal and the brain will swim in a nutritive bath - some clear, mobile, amber liquid . In still deeper time the cooling earth will force a retreat to galleries and laboratories deep inside the bowels of the earth following the diminishing supply of heat with boring machinery and glaring artificial lighting. Wells takes pleasure in noting that the whole of this imaginary book may vanish in the smoke of a pipe with no great bother - one of the great advantages of unwritten literature.

But of course it did not vanish. It ended up in a book that would guarantee it a very enduring life. The book was *War of the Worlds* (1898). Mars is an ancient world and evolution has proceeded farther than on earth, thus it is the logical setting for Man of the Year Million. The Martians were 4-foot diameter round heads. They had very large dark-coloured eyes, no nostrils, no ear per se. They had a fleshy beak for a mouth. For hands, they had a bundle of tentacles. The internal anatomy was, in a word, simple. They had no entrails and did not eat. Rather they injected blood from other creatures, most notably a type of biped with flimsy skeletons and feeble musculature, and a round head with large eyes set in flinty sockets.

The Martians were absolutely without sex and allied tumultuous emotions. They budded off the parent. Wells's fictional narrator explicitly credits the author of the *Pall Mall Budget* book review with forecasting such creatures, albeit in a foolish, facetious tone . Noting that many a truth is said in jest, the idea seemed likely that Martians had once been like us but with a brain evolved at the expense of the rest of the body . They turn out to be also telepathic. As most readers know, the Martians die off because of their vulnerability to earth's micro-organisms. There were none on Mars, probably because their science eliminated them ages before. We would say nowadays that their immune system had degenerated from disuse. (34)

The mental giantism and diminished sexuality clearly echo Spencer. It has a Lamarckian sensibility in the early part of the argument of man's form being moulded by the trait of intelligence, but Wells does include Darwinian competition in suggesting a subtle mind wins over athleticism in the real world. It's not clear how valid most people would regard that premise in the present. The basic thrust that evolution would trend to such a poorly adaptable form, however, is seemingly orthogenetic, albeit the proof of maladaptation by extinction in a foreign environment rich in micro-organisms isn't strictly the sort of evidence that would prove that particular evolutionary theory.

The critical literature on *War of the Worlds* generally agrees that the Martians are nightmare extensions of ourselves and our machine civilisation. It is a warning that an over-reliance on cold intellect and technology need not lead to better and better. Basically it is a moral it shares with *The Time Machine*. Where the atrophy from over-reliance on technology and the brain is played for comic effect in the *Pall Mall Budget*, here it is played for horror. That a story with such an anti-intellectual moral should come from the pen of a person as intellectual as Wells is slightly ironic, but not amazing. Science fiction writers are a brainy bunch, but are perennially self-critical and worried over the social consequences of science and technology. The early pulp writers of science fiction would use and reuse the images and ideas constructed by Wells in these two revered stories till they became a shorthand stereotype of what future man and advanced alien would look like. (35) Wells, himself, never regarded his atrophied aliens as a realistic speculation. Though he granted life on Mars might exist and even speculated on what interesting differences might be expected because of the harsh environment, his non-fiction writings did not advance the probability that big, bald-headed aliens with degenerate bodies existed. (36) The idea that gave us the Greys was born as a jest that never was intended by its author to be taken as a serious scientific speculation.

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E.T.H.
Extremely *Tenuous* Hypothesis

John Rimmer

In *Magonia* 61's 'Back Page' feature we made a light-hearted comment about Jerome Clark's latest publication, *Spacemen, Demons and Conspiracies: the evolution of UFO hypotheses*. Since then I have had the benefit of receiving a review copy from the publishers, Fund for UFO Research. As with everything Clark writes, it is interesting and well worth reading.

The booklet begins with brief summaries of the range of UFO hypotheses, including occult theories - largely Meade Layne, early versions of the ETH connected with the turn of the century airship waves, and a variety of cranky 'UFOs as living creatures' theories. Clark spends a disproportionate amount of space on this extremely minor sub-theory.

The major part of the book is an attack on the 'New-Ufology' ideas of the sixties and seventies, particularly the works of John Keel and Jacques Vallee. Clark himself, like many Americans now settled into middle-aged, middle-class conformity, has problems about the nineteen-sixties. Clark's historicist view of ufology sees it emerging from the original sightings and contacts in the forties into two separate strands of thought: the 'saucerians' - pro-contact, space-brothers oriented, and the 'ufologists', scientific and sceptical of contact claims. There is a great deal of truth in this, although the separation between the two streams was never as total as Clark believes, and he has rather starry-eyed views on the scientific rigour of the 'ufologists'. At one point he claims: "To [ufologists] the ETH was something more to be assumed than to be speculated about [true, but hardly scientific]. Ufology's best and brightest had more interest in investigating reports and correlating data than in wondering about the Greater Meaning of it All". In your dreams, Jerry!

In fact it would be hard to find a UFO magazine in the fifties and sixties which did not from time to time waste a great deal of paper in vague, speculative rambling articles - what Hilary Evans memorably describes as 'deserts of arid speculation' - about life and the universe. The magazines that didn't, presumably Clark's data correlators, were simply listings of cases; mostly uninvestigated reports from newspapers. These were, and are still, very useful in their way, but hardly represent the 'hard work and shrewd analysis' which Clark claims as a hallmark of the scientific 'ufologists'.

This cosy sub-division of the subject came under threat in the seventies with the rise of two of Clark's principal *betes-noires*, John Keel and Jacques Vallee. I agree that Keel was responsible for introducing a new element of anti-scientific irrationalism into the field of ufology, and in *Magonia*'s '25 Years Ago' columns you will have read how Alan Sharp regularly locked horns with Keel over his lack of scientific credibility. In Keel's favour it must be said that his investigations (and when all is said he probably did more first-hand investigation than most so-called scientific 'ufologists') opened out the field of ufology, and yes, Clark is right, helped undermine the complacent acceptance of the ETH amongst most ufologists.

Vallee is a scientist, and his first two books are still held up as examples of the kind of 'correlative' work that Clark assumes was the standard for ufologists at the time. The fact that they are still worth reading simply serves to demonstrate how little of that type of work was actually going on then. With *Passport to Magonia* Vallee moved into the realm of 'sixties counterculture', in Clark's view. I suspect that most of Vallee's interest in ufology was fulfilled by the time he published *Invisible College* in the late seventies, and his later books are largely rehashes or diaries of his more productive period.

The real problem for Clark's thesis with both these writers is that they showed that the UFO phenomenon was *not* containable in a simple ETH pigeonhole. The problem was one of perception: the perception of what constituted a UFO report. Clark castigates *FSR* for carrying articles by the likes of F W Holiday about the Loch Ness Monster, and certainly they were tedious enough to read at the time. But at least they were able to demonstrate that the ETH was not the only unproven theory that could be hung around the phenomenon.

Naturally it is when Clark comes to discuss and dismiss the psycho-social hypothesis (PH) that *Magonia*'s collective ears prick up. We really wanted to see the context in which were we described as giving aid and succour to a 'walking corpse'. Disappointingly there is no context. Clark simply raises the subject then throws it away virtually unexamined. Its proponents are described as 'counterculturalists' (them again, Jerome Clark does seem to have a problem with this concept), Jungians, English majors (I presume he means 'graduates' in British-English, rather than military gentlemen) and librarians. OK, I admit it, I'm a librarian, so is Peter Rogerson. As far as I can tell the only difference this has made to my life as a ufologist is that I have been able to order obscure books free rather than pay 50p for a reservation card.

His description of the PH is brief: "psycho-social theorists held that cultural imagination and altered states of consciousness caused individuals to undergo visionary experiences which they mistook for 'real' (event-level) ones. Since high-strangeness claims were practically never matched with the sort of evidence needed to sustain them, this was not, on the surface, an unreasonable approach". This is a very fair summary of the psycho-social approach, and I was expecting a counter-argument at least as detailed as his partially successful demolition of Keel and Vallee. But we are simply told that "as eventually became all too apparent" the theory was suitable only for the dreaded librarians who wrote about ufology as "an exercise in literary criticism".

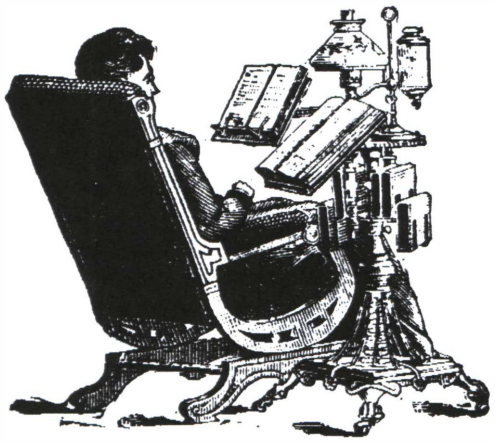
I think part of the reason why Clark has abdicated on his attempt to counter the PH is that, despite such writers as Martin Kottmeyer and one or two other contributors to Fortean rather than ufological literature, it has never really been seriously promoted in the USA, and as is becoming clearer and clearer, American ufology like much of American society is tremendously insular. This is understandable in a such a huge and diverse country, but it does reduce the range of influences and ideas which impinge on US ufology. To read an average American UFO magazine it would be hard to discern that anywhere else in the world exists which does not have a link with the US: Rendlesham only features in American magazines because it was a US base; the Berwyn Mountain case has no such transatlantic connection so it is largely ignored. The massive dominance of government cover-up and conspiracy theories in American ufology can be sustained only by ignoring the fact that there are other governments around the world, not all of whom are at the US's bidding. Have the Roswell proponents ever considered what might happen if a similar event occurred in Libya, Iran or China?

On the last page this book is revealed as a prop for the ETH. Clark admits that humans do perceive a remarkable range of anomalous experiences: "as... psychosocial theorists rightly remind us... gods, monsters, fairies, even merfolk... we can grant the legitimacy of fantastic experience without taking the further step of confusing it with event," except of course for UFOs. The core UFO phenomenon is the "daylight disc, radar/visual and landing traces (and, perhaps crash/retrieval)". The ETH, in these cases, has been shown to be "reasonable, testable and meaningful. At the least it has demonstrated the presence of a physical phenomenon with a technlogy which interacts with its immediate environment."

Well, Jerome, where are these cases? You quote Trans-en-Provence, yet this has already been effectively demolished by French ufologist Eric Maillot. Maillot's original report is even more devastating than the edited version published in *UFOs 1947-1997* (John Brown, 1997). We are anxious to see those cases which show the ETH to be reasonable and testable, and ask Jerome Clark, and any other ufologist who claims such evidence to send details to us, and maybe we too will be obliged finally to give the living corpse of the psycho-social hypothesis a decent burial.

Seriously, send details to *Magonia* at the editorial address, or E-mail me at: *johnr@magonia.demon.co.uk*, or write to John Harney, who will undertake an analysis of any cases submitted, at 27 Enid Wood House, High Street, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 1LN.

BOOK Reviews



Reviews by Peter Rogerson, except where stated

Jim Marrs. *Alien Agenda: the untold story of the extraterrestrials among us.* HarperCollins, 1997. £16.99.

Is Oliver Stone planning a film on UFOs and ET's? This thought is prompted by the fact that Jim Marrs is the author of *Cross Fire*, a Kennedy conspiracy book, which was one of a couple on which the film JFK was based. Where Marrs goes can Stone be far behind? Marrs' conspiracy beliefs are well to the fore in this promiscuous and largely uncritical collection of UFO lore, which opens with the 'moon is a spaceship' nonsense of Don Wilson, continues through ancient astronauts and varieties of UFO history to Roswell, abductions and the remote viewing saga. Marrs populist conspiracism leads him to promote the Alternative 3 hoax as a serious topic. Though this book is plugged as a major investigation, and Marrs is a professional journalist, his research largely consists of reading a collection of UFO books, often themselves pretty low grade pot-boilers. While this does allow him to present some forgotten pieces of UFO lore it does not lead to a serious, balanced treatment, it does raise some very serious questions about his reliability as an assassination researcher.

Gregory M Kanon. *The Great UFO Hoax: the final solution to the UFO mystery.* Galde Press, 1997. £11.99, pbk.

As *Magonia* readers will know, for many years I have been intrigued by the possibility that there has been a conspiracy or conspiracies to promote the ETH, the curious statements by a number of public figures about how the world would unite against an ET threat; the presence of a number of fringe political figures around ufology; the curious way that the governing committee of the old NICAP resembled a who's who of the military industrial complex all add grist to the mill. The idea was the subject of the very first UFO book of all, Bernard Newman's 1949, *The Flying Saucer* (the theme was used by by Martin Caiden in *The Mendelav Conspiracy* and in Hawkey and Bingham's *Wild Card*. It was also promoted by a number of ufologists including Leon Davidson, William Spaulding, and on and off Jacques Vallee.

I was therefore eager to see if this book provided any good evidence or persuasive arguments for the existence of such a conspiracy. It does not; instead of an insightful discussion of possible media manipulations and playing on the politics of UFO groups we get a face value presentation of UFO reports, only arguing that their amazing technology is a product of the US government. So we have the usual nonsense about the US's secret antigravity devises, beam weapons, Nikola Tesla, mind control etc. This includes the claim that the Tunguska meteorite of 1908 was the result of one of Tesla death ray experiments going wrong. Apparently this amazing technology is not used for any purpose other than scaring the American public shitless so that come the day they will let the agents of the New World order in the Federal Emergency Agency take over I find that even harder to believe than dear old EBE Krill sucking strawberry ice cream.

There is one piece of blatant dishonesty in this book which tells us a lot about the author. The claim on p.85 that the Tehran UFO case occurred In the late 1970's, around the time of the attack on the American Embassy, with the clear implication that the events were connected, and the UFO was some sort of American secret device. The UFO case actually took place 3 years before the siege of the embassy, at a time when the Shah of Iran still seemed secure on his peacock throne. A footnote shows that Kannon knows this. By their lies and evasions ye shall know them.

John and Anne Spencer. *Fifty years of UFOs: from distant sightings to close encounters.* Boxtree, 1997. £18.99.

A well rounded and above average coffee table book, giving a good introduction to newcomers and managing to have interesting things to say to old hands. The Spencers examine the changes in ufology in five chapters which cover each of the UFO decades, placing these changes in historical and cultural setting. They eschew sensationalism and the ETH, and suggest that UFO reports are generated by a mixture of novel physical phenomena and psychological processes, perhaps with a bit of government disinformation thrown in. There are refreshingly sceptical comments on Roswell and Bentwaters (though BUFORA-watchers will be amused by the airbrushing out from that saga and indeed, apart from a solitary bibliographic reference, the whole book, of Jenny Randles. I understand that BUFORA photographic experts are busy computer altering old committee group photographs!). There is one real revelation, that in the original text of Betty Hill's letter to Donald Keyhoe just one week after the sighting, she was already talking about having Barney put under hypnotic regression to find out what really panicked him in the field. Where did that idea come from?

If there is an omission in this book, it is in not treating the new ufology of the 1960's and 1970's, whether of John Keel, Allen Greenfield, Jerry (1970's) Clark or dare I say it, MUFOB. This would have fitted in well with the Spencers thesis, for the new ufology occurred at a time of hippydom, consciousness exploration and the revived interest in the paranormal, also a time of internal conflict within the US. The revival of the ETH in America coincided with the second cold war. I hope that this omission was not in order to make some of the Spencer's ideas seem more original than they are.

Kevin D. Randle. The Randle Report: UFOs in the 90's. M Evans and Co., 1997 $19.95, £14.95.

Kevin D. Randle. Conspiracy of Silence. Avon Books, 1997. $12.50, £10.95.

The first of these book is a collection of essays on a variety of ufological topics which has a curiously ambivalent quality. On the one hand there are detailed, sceptical critiques of Ed Walters, Travis Walton and the Roswell autopsy movie; reasonably even handed discussions of the Chupacabras affair and the Varginha alien story, even the first hints of disillusion with Roswell, yet still Randle holds on tenaciously to Roswell, saying at one point that real photos of the crash and aliens must exist, its just that no one has found them yet. Still he defends Marcel, and adds new desperate tales, a clue left in the dedication of one of his books by a dead witness, and the story of Cactus Jack, who of course is conveniently dead, but his friends insist told them about the crash. Should all prove in vain and Roswell fall, the backup is being prepared, another crash report, this time in Shag Harbour, Nova Scotia in 1967. Again what at the time did not make much of a splash is being improved with fresh memories, tales of Russian submarines etc. Of course if what fell was a bit of a Russian satellite or a Russian spy plane, they may have been interested.

The second work is a study of the US Air Force investigation of UFOs along with more promotional material on Roswell. Randle simply cannot accept that the Air Force might have honestly come to different conclusions than himself, and conducted only desultory investigations of what it knew to be nonsense, keeping any deep investigation to occasions when it feared someone might have accidentally stumbled

upon one of their own secrets. No, there has to be vast conspiracy. Never mind that the motivation for than conspiracy is vague. If indeed a crashed flying saucer had been found at Roswell, for all Harry Truman would have know, its occupants friends and family might have landed on the White House Lawn the next day to ask for the wreckage and bodies back. There would have been pressure to reveal the news as fast as possible before events overtook them.

We are then asked to believe that every subsequent American president has gone along with this conspiracy, including John Kennedy, Johnson with his back against the wall in Vietnam, Tricky Dicky Nixon, goody goody Carter, daft Reagen, Slick Willy, the lot. None breaks ranks to get their name in the history books and dish their opponents. Or has each and every Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided to keep this great secret from the Presidents? In fact proponents of these theories have to invoke ever more elaborate *X-Files* type of secret government conspiracy to keep the show on the road.

In fact the solution to Roswell may have been staring us in the face all along. A couple of weeks after Kenneth Arnold the term flying saucer or flying disk had none of the extraterrestrial connotations it now has. There is not the slightest reason to believe that in July 1947 Marcel or anyone else thought of the wreckage in terms of spaceships. Indeed from the fact that Marcel got the publicity machine working overdrive, we can work out that he already had decided that the wreckage was not going to turn out to be a secret Russian device, premature revelation of which would spark World War III, or something so high tech as to be obviously one of their projects that they ought to keep shtumm on. No, it was something reassuringly unthreatening and low tech, and he could earn Brownie points by diffusing all that hysterical talk about Russian missiles with it. Imagine his surprise when he is told it is secret after all, and the panic which might have followed.

The tales of the ETs come later, after Scully, when elements of that story begin to merge with vague Roswell memories. It's then that Marcel gets the taunts of being the man who couldn't tell the difference between a balloon and a spaceship. Perhaps by then he come to believe, never actually being told what it really was, that it had been a spaceship all along

Michael Shermer. *Why People Believe Weird Things: pseudoscience, superstition and other confusions of our time.* W H Freeman, 1997. $22.95, £17.99

Shermer is a sort of born again atheist like Steuart Campbell, and president of the Sceptics Society. Although he takes a rather superficial look at the usual suspects (NDE, mediums, abductions, false memories), the main meats are detailed critiques of creationism, the new race science and holocaust revisionism. In the latter case Shermer shows the kind of evidence which proves the holocaust *did* take place. The pseudo-beliefs he attacks are far more dangerous than the nonsense that Charles Berlitz comes out with, and they are what people like CSICOP should be tackling. This book therefore provides a valuable public service. On a somewhat lighter note, there are chapters on two lesser known strange beliefs: Frank Tipler's Physics of Immortality, arguably one of the great pseudo-science classics of the century; and Ayn Rand and her sect of Objectivists, nominally dedicated to free thought and rationality, but in fact operating a typical quasi Stalinist personality cult.

Stephen J. Dick. *The Biological Universe: the twentieth-century extraterrestrial life debate and the limits of science.* Cambridge University Press, 1996. £40.00

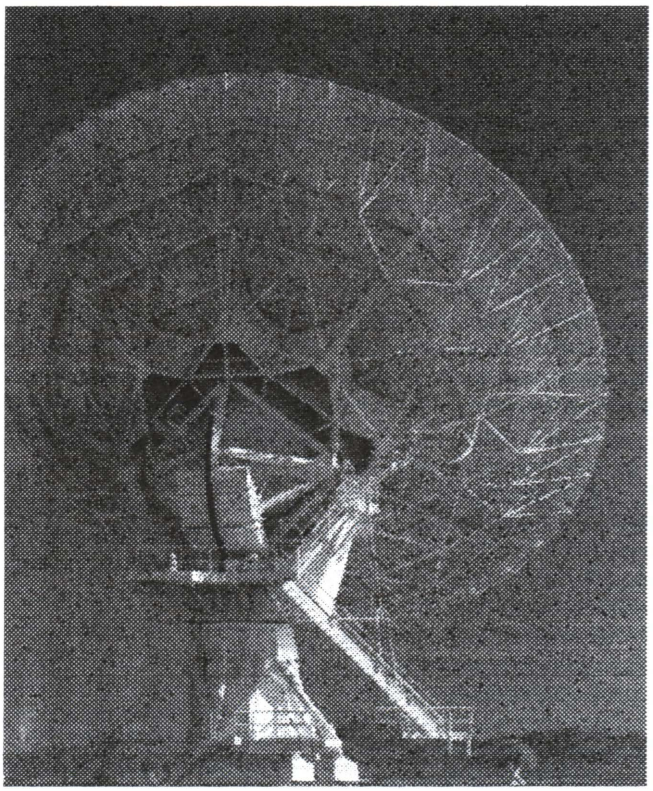
Albert A. Harrison. *After Contact: the human response to extraterrestrial life.* Plenum Trade, 1997. $28.95.

Two books covering the field of the SETI project. The first provides a detailed examination of the changing status of the idea of extraterrestrial life through this century in both scientific and popular culture, the second is more concerned. with the current attempts to communicate with alleged ET's by means of radio telescopes and with trying to make some kind of estimation as to what ET life may be like. Both books look, in moderately sceptical terms at the UFO phenomena Chapter six of Dick provides a discussion of the rise and fall of the ETH in ufology, noting its brief period of potential scientific almost-respectability in the late 1960's, its decline and reappearance in a wholly unscientific form. Harrison, too, looks at the ETH as a false alarm in the discussion of ET contact. Both authors clearly have a good grasp of the literature on the subject. and their scepticism is not wholly dismissive.

In their treatment of the CETI projects from the 1960's onwards. Dick provides extensive historical detail, while Harrison is more concerned with the implications for contact. Neither writer really engages in a critical discussion of the bedrock assumption of the CETI project; that ET would be sufficiently like us be engaged on the same projects. Harrison is able to understand that ET's would be physically very different from human beings, yet he still has hopes that some would be mentally similar enough to engage in contact.

How realistic is all this. We should note that Harrison tends to equate intelligence with ability to build radio telescopes! A much more realistic definition would be the ability to handle and communicate complex abstract information, some sort of equivalent of articulate language. Of the millions of species on our planet only one has developed articulate language, or developed art and technology. Supporters of CETI and the ETH often invoke parallel evolution to argue that creatures having different biological ancestry can end up with similar appearance and behaviour. Harrison uses the example of sharks and dolphins. However sharks and dolphins share the same habitat, and do have common, though of course very remote, ancestry. However there are no marsupial people, no tool using language-users descended from the new world monkeys, or even from the ouran outans, in parallel to our own descent from the chumperilla complex. Had an asteroid done for the chumperillas as it did for the dinosaurs, it is highly likely that technology would never have developed on earth.

Even within the history of our own species, heavy industry, the prerequisite for radio telescopes and space ships does not appear to have been an inevitability at all. Most human societies, whose inhabitants were just as smart as us didn't develop heavy industry. Most human societies reach a level of technology sufficient to keep the exploiter strata in reasonable luxury and then discourage further innovation. Only one out of thousands of human cultures developed radio telescopes.



Even assuming that by some miracle the inhabitants of Xenos did develop along very similar lines to contemporary Euro-American culture, how long would that culture last. Only 500 years ago the idea of a superior technology would have been interpreted as building bigger and more elaborate cathedrals. Our projects would be incomprehensible in many ways to them. Will we still be dreaming of radio telescopes and space ships in 10,000 years time? Pass even that barrier and we are still face with the fact that in the unlikely event that we did get a message from Xenos there is not much possibility that we could make sense of the result. If you doubt that try to imagine what a panel composed of William Shakespeare, Francis Bacon and John Dee would have made of a

computer manual written in Thai or Gujerati (chosen on the grounds that I doubt if even the most polymath Jesuit of the period knew them). Indeed they could never understand a computer manual even if written in English. They would have to become a five year old again and learn absolutely everything afresh and then only if the whole of modern science was presented in a historical and logical sequence.

But the Xenoids won't be our own umpteenth great grandchildren (in spirit if not shape as most CETI/ETH enthusiasts implicitly believe) but entities vastly more biologically different from us than the bacteria which thrive in the sulphur vents on the ocean floor. No exercise of imagination will allow us to understand their life ways. At least reviewing this CETI literature gives me the satisfaction of proving myself more sceptical than that old CETI enthusiast Phil Klass.

Nicholas P. Spanos. *Multiple Identities and False Memories: a sociocognitive perspective.* American Psychological Association, 1996. £26.95

Nick Spanos, who was killed in a plane crash in 1994 (this book was edited from the manuscript by his colleagues) had been a student of T. X. Barber and one of the pioneers of the sociocognitive approach to hypnosis, which argued that hypnosis was not a special altered state of consciousness but a kind of intense role playing has may be found in games or drama. This book extends that approach to the study of multiple personality disorder which Spanos argued was created in response to clues provided by the therapist. It is a fiction born out of the mutual needs of the therapist and client.

Readers of *Magonia* may be aware of Sapnos's interest in the UFO abduction claims, and his study reveals that interest, along with interests in and a great knowledge of the background of the satanic abuse claims, and past life memories. This knowledge, much greater than many other commentators in the recovered memory debate, allows him to argue that these radical claims provide convincing evidence that much recovered memory is fantasy.

He undertakes a wide ranging cross cultural study of the dissociation, covering spirit possession, demonology, witchcraft accusations and similar, to show how these altered states serve social purposes, many times empowering the powerless (often women). He notes that both the recovered memory therapists and the False Memory Foundation both portray those (usually women) producing abuse memories, as passive, helpless victims, either of abusive men, or abusive therapists. As an alternative he suggests that part of the power of these abuse memories is that they provide justification for inchoate feelings of anger, resentment and guilt arising from the normal conflicts of family life (Though Spanos does not raise the issue, it is perhaps significant that many of the 40-something adult survivors passed through the generational conflicts of the 1964-73 era).

In the final chapter, Spanos comments on the medicalisation of social problems (again often women's problems). Causes and solutions of present discontents are not sought in the present, where they may call for social action (better jobs, housing, child care, more pay, less hours, less corporate aggression against family life etc etc.) but in the irredeemable traumas of the past. This is an important book, absolutely vital for those engaged in quasi therapeutic activities. We will be able to judge them by how they respond to the issues raised here and in similar works. It also reminds us that Nick Spanos was a sad loss to our field.

Jim Keith. *Casebook on the Men in Black.* IllumiNet Press, 1997. £10.95 pbk.

An American conspiracy-monger now gets in on the act, with a wide ranging review of MIB stories. Unlike Jenny Randles, he is unable to relate stories personally investigated, but I think makes a wider sweep of the published literature (though, of course, omitting the pioneering summary by our illustrious editors back in 1968). There is round up of the MIB in demonology and folklore, though very unreliable sources are used in the process. There is also an amusing look at the exploits of Messrs Barker and Moseley and their role in the spreading of the MIB saga.

Over the years the MIB have mutated from being government agents, through spies, to agents of the mysterious forces controlling UFOs. They appear right at the very beginning of the UFO mythos, with the Maurey Island affair, and were introduced to the fringes of ufology by Barker, Moseley and Bender, but really only became part of the mainstream with the writings of John Keel in the mid 1960's, coinciding with the well known TV SF serial, *The Invaders*. Today MIB have a wider circulation as the ubiquitous phantom social workers. As with ufological MIB, phantom social workers are never caught by the police, never photographed, and their car licence plates never noted down.

Neither Randles and nor Keith really consider the kind of psychological explanations suggested by John Harney. There are also cultural symbols, the three MIB form an inverted trinity, they are a sort of composite image of foreigner, gangster, government agent, and the essence of paranoid fear. More mundanely MIB stories form an excellent excuse for witnesses who feel they are being badgered by hordes of ufologists.

Charles F. Emmons *At the Threshold: UFOs, science and the New Age.* Wild Flower Press, 1997. £12.95 pbk.

This is a book which promised to be interesting, a sociological study of ufologists and natural scientists and their differing reactions to anomalies; all the more so because Emmons is the author of a very useful study of supernatural folklore and memorates in *Hong Kong Chinese Ghosts and ESP*.

Sadly this work turns out to be a disappointment, based on small samples and hampered by Emmons own pro-New Age bias. In part he operates under the kind of sociological relativism which drives those working in the physical sciences wild. You get the feeling that it takes them all their time to admit that the earth really is spheroid rather than flat, and revolves around the sun rather than vice versa. Thus Emmons argues along the lines that the differences between scientists and ufologists lie in differing social perceptions rather than one group being right and the other wrong. He also leaps on to the bandwagons that claim that the new (i.e. 70 year old!) physics opens up all sorts of mystical and paranormalist possibilities, and seems surprised that even among the ufologists, those with a background in the physical sciences disagree. The thought that this might simply be because, unlike writers in the social sciences and humanities, they know what they are talking about on this topic. escapes him.

Emmons draws attention to the fact that fewer people with advanced degrees are involved with ufology in Europe, but this may be due to the educational system. Until very recently in Britain, far fewer people attended university than in the States, and there were far fewer universities. Also, unlike the United States, British ufology in its formative years was totally dominated by antiscientific contactee fans, and by in parts by social snobbery. In fact in the 1960s a number of young scientists, including the well known science writer Paul Davies, did show an interest. They received a predictably hostile reaction, not least from BUFORA, whose journal editor, proudly displaying a fraudulent PhD awarded by a couple of clerical con artists operating out of former Methodist Chapel in Seven Sisters Road, Tottenham, regularly denounced them as "white coated godlings of the laboratory". Some stuck it out for a couple of years but all eventually gave up.

Emmons is perhaps not too familiar in any case with non-American ufology, as his view of the subject is almost entirely based on the belief systems of the United States, where there is a much greater readiness to invoke non human intelligences, whether extraterrestrial or otherwise, as explanations for puzzling experiences.

Ian Stevenson, *Where Biology and Reincarnation Intersect.* Praeger, 1997. £13.50 pbk

A summary for the general public of Stevenson's long awaited study of cases where birthmarks or congenital deformities on a child appear to coincide with wounds on the body of the alleged previous personality. As Stevenson warns that proper evaluation of individual cases should be based on the full two volume monograph, not to hand, and unlikely, owning to its price unlikely to be bought by many people, or to be available on the shelves of public libraries, and such evaluation is not something which I would be competent to give, I will confine myself to general impressions.

This is clearly a study in a different league from the popular literature on reincarnation and one which sceptics will have to address with something more than a sweep of the hand. There are however a number of hints that their task may not be an impossible one. My attention was caught by the large number of cases in which the previous
personality (alleged) died in violent and dramatic circumstances of the sort which would give rise to gossip and rumour, which may reach wide audiences, it may well be that Stevenson coming from a relatively impersonal mass culture underestimates the role of gossip and story telling in predominantly face to face societies. There are

also a number of cases from India where the child claims that the previous incarnation was a member of a higher caste, allowing them to express disdain for their current parents. In a more general sense reincarnation beliefs seem to allow for children to behave in inappropriate manners, not showing the correct customary respect for their elders, for example, or for girls to act as tomboys.

It is difficult to know how to interpret the birth marks. As physical evidence for paranormal events there are clear parallels with the marks claimed by UFO abductees, and abduction books, like this one does, may show photographs of marks as proof. I imagine that the response of most sceptics would be to argue that what is involved here in coincidence, that someone will have had wounds that coincide with any birth mark. I'm not sure that such an explanation would be totally adequate.

Stevenson's reincarnation hypothesis is not trouble free, apart from contradicting a huge mass of contemporary biological thought, it leaves much unanswered. Stevenson coins the term psychosphore to denote the entity which carries the memory and personality from one incarnation to the next, but makes no attempt to define what it is. As it is supposed to produce physical results in the form of birthmarks, by definition in most be physical, it most also be able to encode information, again, by definition, physical. Where in physics could it lie. The answer least incongruous, but not much, to modern science, would be to imagine that memories could somehow be downloaded onto individual atoms or molecules, which then become ingested by the mother and pass into the foetus. I have never heard such a theory proposed, not least I suspect becauce it is not ethereal enough to appeal to the sort of people who believe in dualism.

Stevenson notes that some societies seek to experimentally test for reincarnation by making marks on the body of the deceased, and seeing if they appear as birthmarks in a child. Perhaps members of the SPR ought to mutilate themselves in the interests of experimental science and see if their mutilations appear in children. On the other hand not only would that be cruel to the child, but their estates could face some very novel law suits. As some of the cases come from native American communities in litigation loving North America, perhaps some smart lawyers will already have their eyes on a new markets

Redfern's Red Herrings

Nicholas Redfern. *A Covert Agenda*, Simon & Schuster, 1997. £16.99.

In the prologue to this book the author states: Through the use of both official documentation and witness testimony, it is my hope that what you are about to read will conclusively prove that since the late 1940s, British Governments have been acutely aware that our planet has been targeted" for visitation by creatures from elsewhere.

This suggests that we will be presented with startling and convincing UFO evidence never previously revealed. Needless to say, anyone who hopes for this will be disappointed.

Redfern uses the technique pioneered by Donald Keyhoe in the early 1950s, although his style owes more to Timothy Good. He gives accounts of official reports and tells us what he has discovered about how the Ministry of Defence (MoD) deals with them. He suggests that the government is gradually preparing us so that they can reveal the truth, which is that UFOs are alien space craft, just as Keyhoe told us all those years ago. And we are still waiting.

If it is true that the evidence for extraterrestrial visitors (ETs) is convincing then the best approach would be to select the most detailed unexplained reports and discuss them in some depth, showing in what ways alternative explanations are unsatisfactory. Unfortunately Redfern gives the impression of regarding one source as being almost as good as another. Witnesses are assumed to be reliable simply because they are professional people, such as pilots or police officers.

No attempts are made to assess the quality of the reports to see if they are as impressive as they appear to be. Let us take an example from an official report of an incident which occurred at RAF Topcliffe on 19 September 1952: Meteor aircraft observed at approx. 500 feet and descending. White object was seen 5 miles astern at approx. 15000 feet and moving at comparatively slow speed on similar course. The weather at the time was described as clear skies, sunshine and unlimited visibility .

Given an unidentified object seen in the sky in such conditions, how does one go about making a reliable estimate of its distance and altitude? I would say that this is an impossible task. If you don't know what the object is then you don't know how big it is, and thus you have no way of estimating how far away it is - not even if you are an RAF pilot.

There are a number of other reports which include wildly unreliable estimates of height and distance, including the following delightfully self-contradictory one: When he was questioned, Mr Ruck-Keene said that he was unable to judge the distance of the object without knowing its size, but estimated that it was around five miles from his location and at an altitude of 3,000 feet.

Cases involving radar can seem impressive and some are described in this book. But no consideration is given to the possibility of anomalous radar propagation and other technical problems involved in the interpretation of radar images. The true explanations of some of these radar reports may be highly complex, and amateur ufologists are not given sufficient technical information, and do not possess the resources, to investigate them. Anyway, most readers of UFO books do not want explanations, they want the ETs, so that's what they get.

No amount of sighting reports, even well-witnessed, unexplained ones, are going to provide proof of the reality of ETs visiting us, as Redfern admits. But what if the British Government has crashed saucers in its possession - undeniable evidence of UFO reality ? I read this chapter eagerly, impatient to see the revelations that would make Roswell seem insignificant. So, where do we start? Er, Roswell, actually. But we are also promised a handful of other reports...which suggest that several alien vehicles have come to grief on British soil .

One of these UFOs was a Foo Fighter which crashed in Britain during the Second World War. The source of this information is a fellow who told Leonard Stringfield that he had seen alien bodies at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, after a UFO crash in Arizona. This man had also heard rumours about the crash of the Foo Fighter. This was confirmed by John Lear, who told him that the object was later strapped to a B-17 and flown to the USA for analysis.

We also learn that British military personnel were involved in the recovery of a UFO which crashed on German soil in the early 1960s . And the source for this one? Robert Dean, who has divulged an extraordinary amount of information concerning NATO's involvement in the UFO puzzle .

Apart from a few other reports from such notoriously unreliable characters as Stringfield and Dean, there are accounts of things crashing to the ground and being retrieved by military personnel. Well, bits and pieces do sometimes fall off military planes, and there are such things as remotely piloted aircraft which may come down where they are not supposed to, but such possibilities are unlikely to excite the average punter.

We are given no evidence that would convince any reasonably sane person that the MoD is in possession of crashed UFOs and living or dead ETs. This idea is strictly for the lunatics whose idea of fun is to go trespassing on MoD property: their absurd exploits can be read about in the glossy UFO magazines.

Redfern obviously wants to rise above the idiotic trash presented in such publications, so he gives us a lot of interesting material about the organisation of the MoD and security services and how they are, or may be, involved in the investigation of UFO reports. It is thus a pity that he takes such an apparently uncritical view of many of the reports he presents, and gives the impression of taking seriously some of the more crackpot theories.

For example, he was told by a woman working for Marconi at Frimley that one night a security guard had encountered a humanoid (but decidedly non-human) creature in an office, reading top secret files. This apparition quickly de-materialised - presumably beamed up by Scottie. He then goes on to mention the remote-viewing notions once entertained by the US Defense Intelligence Agency and comments: Perhaps, somewhere else in the universe, such techniques have already been perfected, to the extent that a living organism can now literally come and go at will, completely unhindered by our seemingly rigid physical laws. Oh, come off it! If the ETs could do this, then why would they need their flying saucers?

A Covert Agenda contains material that has the makings of a serious work on UFO reports and official investigations of them, but it makes so many concessions to uncritical UFO believers that serious readers will be put off. Of course, if Redfern had thrown out all the rubbish, or assessed it in a rational, scientific manner, the publishers would not have been interested. They know that there are a lot of nutters out there... **JH**

Strieber, Whitley. *The Secret School*. Simon & Schuster 1997. £15.99.

With *The Secret School,* Strieber retreats yet further from the traditional alien contact/abduction scenario to explore something far more ineffable and sublime - his own mind. Recalling his night time childhood visits to a wooded area of San Antonio, Texas, Strieber shares with us the teachings of a mysterious nun-like entity called The Sister of Mercy, who initiated him and eleven other children into the secrets of time and space.

It's a well written book, coming across as a collision between *The Celestine Prophecies* and an angst free Philip K. Dick. Through the use of deep trance techniques, Strieber vividly recalls numerous childhood escapades. Predictably, his adventures are not those of your average 50's kid. He visits the pyramids on Mars, experiments with virtual reality - four decades ahead of its time, witnesses the birth and destruction of the earth, relives past lives spent marvelling at the high civilisation of the Leonine era c.10,000BC, wanders ancient Rome (where as Octavius' Greek tutor he takes credit for keeping Rome alive and setting the scene for the arrival of Jesus), plummets from the Bastille during the French Revolution, and picks his way through the remnants of our own shattered future.

Strieber seems unclear exactly how to interpret these memories, are they real or some form of imaginative remote viewing? Recounting his childhood "Virtual Reality" experiences he says, "we could not distinguish a vivid multimedia presentation from reality", yet he happily accepts as fact the cosmic theme park rides he's taken on by his own feverishly active imagination. His own uncertainty is clear - and understandable given the circumstances. "I am not asking that my stories be taken as fact" he tells us at one point before, a few pages later, reassuring us that the book "is a true story about real, factual events"

He does provide us with some fascinating insights into his early life, during which he admits to being "interested in causing confusion and creating inexplicable mysteries". In classic visionary mould he was struck by severe illness at a young age, undergoing a Near Death Experience and running a fever so high he "was probably lucky to escape without brain damage". But there are problems. He was, he says, obsessed with the planet Mars throughout his childhood, driven by memories of visiting the pyramids there. Yet in *Report on Communion*, fellow experiencer Ed Conroy's 1989 investigation into Strieber's story, there is no mention of such an obsession. In fact, though he first saw the Mars face in 1989 it was not until 1995's *Breakthrough* that he refers to it and the Pyramids at all, some time after Richard Hoagland and friends had dented the public imagination with their own theories. Likewise Strieber's recollections of human high civilisation and its destruction 12,000 years ago. Why does he only remember this era of the Sphinx builders now, so soon after Hancock, Bauval and others have made public their ideas? Did reading *The Orion Mystery* trigger off such previously long buried memories? Or are these fugue state fantasies being genuinely mistaken for real memories, as suggested by Martin Kottmeyer's "Boundary Deficit Hypothesis" (*Magonia* 32, also on the *Magonia* web-site)?

In the final section, Strieber journeys into the future and leads us into the realm of prophecy. His predictions range from the mundane - glass-fronted fridges seen in childhood visions, to the extravagant - the collapse of the US federal system after an atomic explosion in Washington DC. This is triggered by a conspiracy involving the KGB, the Iranian secret police and shadowy religious and political groups within the USA. (Interestingly, remote viewer Courtney Brown, he of the Hale Bopp UFO, has predicted a nuclear strike on New York City, though this is to be perpetrated by evil reptilian aliens.)

Strieber is steering us towards "a new vision of mankind", one that is "free in time and space" and has ascended to "a higher, freer and richer level of being." Ultimately, it seems, we are to become the Visitors themselves, though I can think of a few in the UFO community who might not be too happy about that. With its optimistic tone and seamless blend of popular fringe ideas such as astral travel, remote viewing, mystical history and only a slight hint of the usual UFO conspiracy paranoia, The Secret School is clearly targeted beyond the usual UFO crowd at a more general New Age market It will be interesting to see what impact, if any, it has on its intended audience and UFO belief in general.

NB Strieber followed the book's release with seminars and a meditation tape, but has announced that his next book is to reveal hard proof of the UFO coverup. Could the path to self-discovery have lead to a dead end for his publishers? **MP**

Coudris, Ren. *The Roswell Message*. Gateway Books, 1997 £12.95

Quoting a deceased Carl Jung, this book opens with the same bible lines with which Whitley Strieber's ends; "Be ye as children and you will enter the kingdom of heaven", but I doubt even children would take this seriously. From the people who brought you *Diary of an Unborn Child* comes this fascinating investigation into everybody's favourite UFO crash. The approach is certainly novel; through an advanced form of psychometry, the author's medium wife is able to contact Lilit, one of the deceased aliens themselves, by concentrating on still images from the Santilli "autopsy" film. With corroborating evidence from a galaxy of dead stars, including Carl Jung, JFK and Marilyn Monroe (who's still the same sassy dame she always was), this ought to be the last word in Roswell investigation, though it probably won't be. **MP**

Spencer John and Anne, *The Unexplained,* Hodder & Stoughton, £20.00

A glossy package which includes a PC CD ROM and a large format, heavily illustrated book. The CD ROM is a lavish production that skates confidently across the vast expanse of fortean phenomena, without leaving much time to probe beneath the surface. Rather than being truly interactive, it opts for a linear narrative TV documentary format, providing further information on request. The book covers the same material with extra illustrations. An excellent, if uncritical, starting point for budding forteans. **MP**

Out of print UFO and Fortean books
AARDVARK BOOKS
8 Braddon Avenue
Urmston
Manchester, M41 0QD

Roy Stemman. *Reincarnation: True Stories of Past Lives,* Piatkus, London, 1997. £12.99.

As its title promises, this book sets out to entertain the reader with stories which, if authentic, tend to suggest that we live a succession of lives in different bodies, rather than just one.

The author admits that this is not a scientific book . It would be difficult to write a scientific work on this subject, as we have no precise definition of what is meant by reincarnation. What do we say, for example, when past lives overlap, so that a person is allegedly reborn in one body before he has died in his previous one? Stemman's answer is: Such idiosyncrasies in reincarnation accounts remind us that, however compelling the evidence for rebirth, we are still a long way from understanding the mechanics of the spiritual laws which govern its operation.

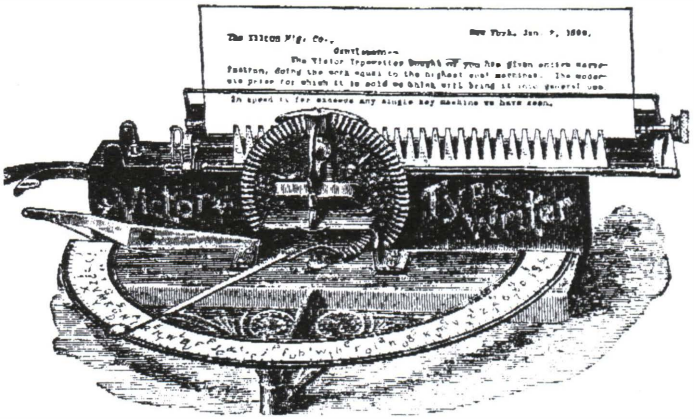
As well as not being a scientific book, this is also not a scholarly one. No attempt is made to indicate the great subtlety and complexity of Hindu and Buddhist thought and belief on this subject, and to contrast it with Western attitudes, which tend to treat the concept of reincarnation as a source of popular entertainment, gratification of the desire to draw attention to oneself by telling amazing stories, or the hope of a pleasanter or more interesting life next time.

Stemman is aware of the sceptical explanations for the evidence produced by people with apparent memories of previous lives, but he gives them little attention, as he is obviously not writing for sceptics.

Some of the cases described, such as Shanti Devi and Bridey Murphy, will be familiar to most readers. There are accounts of group reincarnations, such as Dr Arthur Guirdham and his Cathars. There is even a short chapter on people who remember their future lives, but the author somehow cannot bring himself to take them too seriously, which is reassuring.

If you like reading this sort of thing then you can either buy it now, or pick it up in a second-hand bookshop some time during your next life. **JH**

LETTERS



Letter for publication are welcome, and should be sent to the editorial address on page two or by e-mail to johnr@magonia.demon.co.uk

Dear John
With reference to Jenny Randles' attempt to set the record straight on Rendlesham, I have a good idea why publication of *Left at East Gate* was delayed until June 1997 - to catch the plateau of public interest in UFOs at the subject's fiftieth anniversary. When Warren and Robbins did their lecture tour of the UK endlessly plugging their book they told how the prime minister had been sent a courtesy copy; they then asked the public to urge their MPs to obtain one from the publisher. (This almost matches the actions of NICAP who provided every member of NICAP with a free copy of *The UFO Evidence* in 1964.) Robbins told, with deadly seriousness, how vitally important it was for the public to know the truth about government cover-up at Rendlesham. He is positive a mountain of documents on the case are still hidden from view.

I have seen pre-autographed copies for sale in at least one local bookstore. When Warren spoke at BUFORA 97 in Sheffield he slated Mark Pilkington's review in *Fortean Times*, after first asking if Pilkington was present in the audience. Thereafter followed Warren's usual persuasive and flamboyant take-it-or-leave-it style. Whatever else he is an excellent presenter, far superior to poor Brenda Butler and Dot Street who gave the most boring UFO lectures I have ever heard.

Jenny does not mention that Brenda had seen her first UFO when aged five and had numerous sightings and contacts well before the Rendlesham affair. In the synopsis of her talk she tells of being involved in November 1979 in a similar UFO event, also at Woodbridge AFB at which she was told, by two informants on the base, of "little people floating and wearing monk-like habits". Was one of these informants the same 'Steve Roberts' who leaked the Rendlesham case to her? Later she opines that perhaps the UFO that landed in November 1979 dropped some aliens and returned in December 1980 to pick them up, but "misjudged their landing place". Was 'Roberts' just preying on Brenda Butler's credulity when he talked about "strange little childlike beings suspended in beams of light"? Has Brenda simple confused the first 'landing' with the second one over a year later, and thus made a hotch-potch of Rendlesham from the start? And has Jenny and hard evidence that the Watton radar sightings (if they are genuine) had any connection with the visual ones documented in Halt's memo?

Jenny has said elsewhere that the film *Hangar 18* was going the rounds at this time. *The Roswell Incident* (Berlitz and Moore) was published in the UK only a few weeks before. Len Stringfield's crashed saucer 'revelations' were just getting into the news. Perhaps 'Steve Roberts' decided the time was ripe for the UK to have its first saucer crash (or crashes), and a USAF base was the best location for it. Thus 'unexplained lights' became an alien spaceship crash and the wicked National Security Agency and the Ministry of Defence, as always, became the bad guys.
Sincerely, Christopher Allan, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent

John,
I am a new subscriber to *Magonia*, and I have to say that I very much enjoyed number 61. There are a couple of things that came to mind while reading David Sivier's "Crashed Cups; an interim response to Peter Brookesmith".

Sivier makes the distinction between 'ritual magick' and 'Crowleyanism'. There *is* certainly a difference between Crowleyanism and ritual or ceremonial *magic*, but the six-letter *magick* is a Crowleyan term.

In his *Confessions* (Penguin Arkana, 1989) Crowley wrote that he added the 'k' to 'magic' so that it would have six letters instead of five, "to affirm the identity of man (pentagram) with God (hexagram)." John Symonds, in his biography of Crowley, *The King of the Shadow Realm* (Duckworth, 1989), states that Crowley first used the six-letter word in Naples in 1911, while writing *Book Four*, "to link his brand with the Science of the Magi, as opposed to mere conjuring tricks. It also has a secret meaning, for the k stands for *kteis*, Greek for the female genitals which were now playing a large part in Crowley's magical operations" (p.151). Symonds also writes that "k is the eleventh letter of several alphabets, and eleven is the principal number of magick because it is the number attributed to the Qliphoth - the underworld of demonic and chaotic forces that have to be conquered before magick can be performed" (p.432).

Sivier writes that "Brookesmith's critique can be used in any cultural form" and gives the example of football. This reminds me of something comic book writer Dave Sim once pointed out, that in this televisual age there is an obfuscation of the distinction between the divine (absolute truth; Jesus's "I am the way, the truth and the life") and the merely popular (John Lennon's "bigger than Jesus; Cantona as Christ).

The similarity between religion and ufology is stronger than between it and football. Ufology, especially when it comes to entities and abductions, touches the realm of direct spiritual experience (visions, trances, angels/messengers, etc.) whereas sport can be compared only to the imagery and ceremonial aspects of religious belief.
Barry Kavanagh, Blackrock, Dublin

Dear John Rimmer
A recent book review in *Magonia* stated that the McMartin child abuse case collapsed after the principle witness was found to be schizophrenic. In fact it did not collapse, as her place was taken by a number of children who had been intensively interviewed until they admitted to having been sexually abused, and the case became the longest and most expensive in American legal history, although in the end no-one was found guilty.

I am unable to agree with the reviewer when he says that stories of alien abduction have not caused the same trouble as allegations of child abuse, because the latter are more plausible. The reason abduction stories do not cause trouble is that, if they were true, no crime would have been committed. Consider, moreover, some of the stories that have been told about child abuse: in the McMartin case it was alleged that children and teachers ran around naked in the play ground (which was adjacent to a busy road) even though no passers-by saw this; that the children were taken away from the pre-school and abused in a car-wash, an Episcopalian Church, or a hot-air balloon over the desert by clown, policemen and atomic mutants. In other cases children have supposedly been tortured and smeared with excrement, then returned to their parents who failed to notice anything odd. We are also told that children have been abused in rituals where witches flew in the air, Satan appeared in person and the girls were forced to marry him, and of course babies were sacrificed and eaten, the whole being covered up so cleverly that no-one has ever missed any of the babies, still less found a body. Personally, I would find it much easier to believe in abduction by aliens.
Happy New Year, Basil Humphries, London.

25 Years Ago

The first MUFOB of 1973, volume 5, number 5, was dominated by the first part of Peter Rogerson's *International Catalogue of Type I Cases*. In the doldrums of ufology in the early seventies, the INTCAT selections often formed the main feature of an issue. The early, pre-1947 sections of the catalogue covered great swathes of time; the first one covering the period from 1868 to 1897. In this issue's 'Northern Echoes', Peter describes something of the background to the project, and the problems involved in putting it together. As INTCAT forms a feature of all subsequent issues of MUFOB I shall not mention it again in this retrospective unless some particularly significant event deserves notice.

Another short piece, offering explanations of a number of then-current UFO cases marked the first appearance in our pages of our regular contributor and Editorial Panel member Nigel Watson.

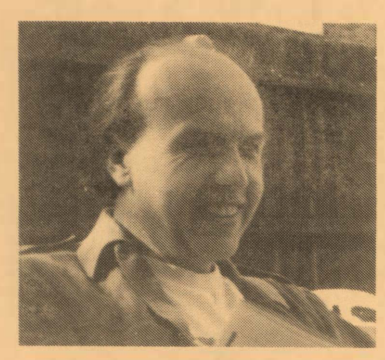
The 'Notes and Quotes' feature, forerunner of 'Hold the Back Page' reprinted some amusing quotes from a magazine *Viewpoint Aquarius* published by Rex Dutta, now a forgotten figure on the ufological fringe but at the time bafflingly popular in some quarters. He had a novel spin on climate change long before it became a fashionable concern: "changes in the weather are caused by rockets puncturing the etheric web of the earth". This happens in a way "that we sneeringly refuse to understand or accept, unless we have begun a serious study of occultism..." naturally. These holes in the etheric web create magnetic anomalies as well, causing holes in the road and the collapse of scaffolding.

Perhaps Dutta was well advised to stick to the day job, which apparently involved selling tropical fish!

Magonia Readers' Group Meetings

take place on the first Sunday of each month at the Railway Pub, Putney, London SW15, from 7.15 p.m. onwards. Good conversation, gossip and the occasional unprecedented outburst. You con't afford to miss one!

Interpreting contemporary vision and belief



THE ROGER SANDELL MEMORIAL COMPETITION

£100 prize

Entries are invited for an essay competition in memory of Roger Sandell on a theme which can be seen as "interpreting contemporary vision and belief", and which reflects the contributions Roger Sandell has made to this magazine. Some suggested topics are: contemporary beliefs about Satanism and their social effects, fringe political influences in ufology, moral panics and the news media, the historical context of contemporary beliefs, and the treatment of anomalous experiences or phenomena by researchers. This list is not intended to be comprehensive, and entrants are invited to contact the Editor to discuss if a proposed topic would be suitable.

RULES:

1. Entry is open to any reader, except those listed as editors of Magonia in this issue. There is no entrance fee.

2. Each entry must be the original and unpublished work of the entrant and must not be submitted elsewhere for award or publication before 30th April 1998.

3. Entries must be between 4,000 and 5,000 words, not including notes and references, but entrants must avoid lengthy footnotes. Entries must be typed, double-spaced on one side of A4 paper, with a sheet giving the title, and the entrant's name and address. Entries must be posted to John Rimmer, John Dee Cottage, 5 James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London, SW14 8HB, United Kingdom, in time to be received by the closing date of 31st March 1998. Entries sent on disk, by fax or e-mail are not acceptable.

4. Entries will be judged by John Rimmer, John Harney and Kevin McClure, and the winner will receive a prize of £100. No correspondence will be entered into. The judges reserve the right to withhold the prize if they consider that no entry reaches a sufficiently high standard.

5. The winning entry will be published in a forthcoming issue of Magonia. The Editors may wish to publish other entries by agreement with the authors.

HOLD THE BACK PAGE

Thomas the crank engine

Those train enthusiasts amongst our readers must be thrilled at the news which is now leaking out through the downmarket news-stand UFO magazines of the vast network of underground railways that link many of Britain's SSUI (Sites of Special Ufological Interest). Rudloe Manor is linked by rail to Downing Street, we learn. The tunnel was apparently built during World War II. You might think that there were one or two other things on the Government's mind at the time, but we can at least see how secrecy was maintained: the whole thing was dug under cover of a wooden vaulting horse, and the soil from the workings distributed around the Rudloe Manor exercise area down the airmen's trouser legs!

The trains apparently travel from Rudloe Manor to Downing Street in just twenty minutes which gives them a speed of about 300 mph. The so-called IRA mortar-bomb attack on Number 10 a few years ago was obviously the windows of the Cabinet Room being blown out with the air pressure from the arrival of the 12.35 from Wiltshire. Maybe in a future issue of *Magonia* we will publish a giant fold-out London Underground style map showing all these lines for the benefit of conspiracy-minded ufologists and frustrated commuters.

Abduction Watch.

We welcome Kevin McClure's *Abduction Watch* magazine to the *Magonia* web site, where we hope to build up an archive of articles from this essential source of sanity in the bizarre and sometimes worrying world of abduction research. Whereas we at *Magonia* are usually content to fulminate and poke fun at the antics of irresponsible researchers, Kevin is actually prepared to do something about them - checking on their claims, investigating their qualifications, and publicising the dangers of their half-baked antics. Every serious student of the subject should subscribe to the magazine (a flyer is included with this copy of *Magonia*, but if yours has gone missing write to Kevin McClure at 3 Claremont Grove, Leeds, LS3 1AX, sending a tenner for twelve monthly issues.) and if you are linked to the World-Wide Web check the archives which are clickable from the *Magonia* site. Unlike a lot of people in this subject, Kevin actually cares about the *people* who get caught up in it. Read *Abduction Watch* and then think hard about what *you* are doing.

Not all nutters are harmless...

A number of more thoughtful ufologists have also started to think very hard about some of the people they are working with in ufology, as facts emerge about one British ufologist who is revealed to have a tangled history of involvement in extreme right wing politics. As there currently seems to be no link between his previous political incarnation and his current ufological output I shan't go into more details at present. However ufology has always been cursed by a sprinkling of fringe political figures, usually right-wing, who are turned on by the atmosphere of conspiracy and paranoia that attaches itself to the subject. Quite a lot of people seem to like the idea of being a persecuted minority - naturally not people who are *really* likely to be a persecuted minority, like Blacks or Jews - and ufology gives some people the opportunity to imagine they are the victim of Big Brother-type oppression, without actually being in any danger. Although most of these people appear to be active in the USA, the recent surge of interest in military-related UFO cases has brought more to the surface in this country too.

A good example of this type of paranoia is circulating on the Internet. A message posted on the Searchnet Mailing List adds yet another route to the massive network of tunnels which have turned the British Isles into a variety of Swiss cheese. This one runs from "horrendous laboratories" beneath the Brecon Beacons in South Wales to Ireland. Yes, Ireland! These subterranean excavations were stumbled across by a soldier who got lost on an exercise and was dragged underground by US service personnel. The complex is apparently run jointly by the US National Security Administration. The poster of the message, shown on the mailing as "Miles J - Irish UFO Research Centre", also claims that a journalist and a UFO group who were about to go public with the story were "put out of business" by "various British UFO researchers [who] were involved in the cover up". Miles J explains that "a UFO researcher in England, was (MUFON respondent) arrested on false drugs charges. He awaits sentence. I wish to make it clear that British UFO Researchers are being shopped and "Mind-Knapped [*sic*] by their own 'colleagues'. S**t [his asterisks] happens, and it IS happening in Britain..."

Our advice is don't go talking to any attractive female *Daily Mirror* reporters in pubs!

Tally Ho!

On a lighter note we hear a variation on the catnapping story. Gareth Medway asks us: "Have you heard the rumour that gangs of fox-nappers are at work in London? The alleged purpose is that since so many foxes have chosen an urban lifestyle there are not enough rural foxes to provide sport for the hunters... men have been seen seizing foxes and then driving off in unmarked white vans (what else?) which have number plates which cannot be traced. These people cannot have an easy task. Unlike cats, who often allow themselves to be stroked by strangers, foxes are shy of humans. It is quite rare to see them at all, and if you approach them they run off. Since the city has all kinds of hiding places, to catch them would, I should think, be almost impossible."

Quite what effect the proposals currently before Parliament to ban foxhunting will have on this trade is unclear. This Bill, incidentally, only bans the hunting of wild mammals with dogs, so there is an opportunity here for hunters to change to hunting with packs of wild feral cats, which could also be supplied by the men in the white vans.

Crisp Crossed

The *Croydon Post* (10 December, 1998) reports another outbreak of crisp packet collecting, with the now familiar story of the manufacturers paying for 'lifesaving treatment' in America for a local child dying of leukaemia, if enough of the greasy wrappers were collected to match the weight of the boy. The urban legend was, as usual, denounced as a 'cruel hoax', and children were reported as being 'devastated'. Walkers Crisps, who seem to be the principle victim of the current crop of rumours, say: "It's a horrible thing to happen and we don't know where it has come from but there have been other cases exactly the same recently". Three schools and a church youth club were mentioned in the newspaper's report. On a positive note one teacher reported that "since the children started collecting crisp-packets the playground has never looked so tidy!"

All of which prompts us to ask, do teachers and reporters never bother checking out these collections, and have they never read any of the dozens of reports of similar 'cruel hoaxes' which appear in the local papers every few months? Besides crisp packets ('potato chips' I think, to our American readers, although that has a different meaning again in Britain) other versions in the past have included collecting the silver paper out of cigarette packets, but I suppose the Health Police have put a stop to that kind of thing nowadays.